

JOHN WYCLIF, AND HIS INTERPRETATION
OF THE SACRAMENTS

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A Thesis
submitted as a partial requirement
for the degree of
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Edinburgh, Scotland

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August 1939



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(Copy)

10th February, 1933

Dear Sir,

I have to inform you that the Senatus, on 9th February, 1933 admitted you as a student under the Ph. D. Ordinance, the subject of your study to be "John Wyclif's Conception of the Church and Its Sacraments", the work to be carried on under the supervision of Professors Burleigh and Watt, and the period of study to extend over two years from October, 1932.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) W. A. Fleming

Secretary to the University.

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N. B.

The official subject as approved by the University Senatus, as indicated in the above letter, was changed with the full approval of the professorial advisors to the narrower subject, "John Wyclif, and His Interpretation of the Sacraments".

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"WYCLIF.... the master of deep thoughts."

JOHN HUSS-- App. Creed.

FOREWORD

It may be said at the outset that this is not a study which includes a textual criticism of the original sources, or the manuscripts of Wyclif. That is a study in itself. I have not gone to the original manuscripts for source material, although I have seen a number of them with interest; but I have rather gone to the standard publications of these manuscripts, both in Latin and in English, which are generally accepted as authentic, and from them I have drawn the original quotations in support of the views of this thesis. I am well aware that later criticism has considerably reduced the number of English works ascribed to Wyclif by Matthew and Arnold (1). Should any be inclined to doubt the authenticity of a few minor works mentioned in this study, it might be well to state that I have concluded with Dr. H. B. Workman that they "are genuine enough so far as matter goes; the voice is the voice of Wyclif, though the hand is not always his". (2)

The main thesis set forth in the following pages is that John Wyclif was a Protestant-- not of course in our modern sense of the term, but very definitely a protesting spirit against the sacramentarian precepts and practices of his day. Too often either well-intentioned or biassed individuals have misrepresented the views of the Reformer, and have made him appear as someone which he really was not. (3) Admittedly, almost any sacramentarian position can find support in his works, but this shows his progressive thinking; and the true

(1) Workman, "John Wyclif", I, 329f; Winn, Wyclif, Select English Writings, Introduction, 29f.

(2) Workman, "John Wyclif", I, Appendix C, 331

(3) Cf. Van Dyke, "The Age of the Renaissance", 51

Wyclif must be judged from the writings of his maturer years. His rugged individualism did not consent to be swept along with the current of ecclesiastical error of his day. He was a free thinker, even to the point of showing a protesting spirit against every one of the sacraments as then interpreted by the Church. It is true that in his thinking he is more catholic in regard to some sacraments than to others-- yet in the case of each one of the seven sacraments of the Church he either entertains serious doubts as to its validity, necessity, etc., or else reaches the point of absolute rejection of that particular sacrament. There are no exceptions, if we judge him by the standards of the Church of his day.

Yet often has his true position been maligned and misrepresented. An obscure writer remarks concerning Wyclif, "Although he teaches the most extravagant doctrines on the sacraments, his teaching has nothing in common with Protestantism".(1) Even the comment of Martin Luther is not true, namely that Wyclif attacked the life of the Church under the papacy, rather than her doctrines.(2) And the rare scholarship of Miss Deanesly has fallen into error when she says, "Wycliffe's teaching about the sacraments and certain other institutions was all conditioned by his appeal to the Scriptures, primarily in their literal sense, though he did not throw overboard the old four-fold interpretation.(3) He had no particular attack to make on baptism, confirmation, marriage, or unction; but the case was otherwise with orders, penance and the mass".(4)

The pages which follow will reveal that "it was Wycliffe's destiny to direct and organize an attack upon the

- (1) "The True John Wycliffe" (Anonymous), 10. London, 1884
- (2) Luther's Table Talk. By Foerstemann. 1845. II, 441; IV, 391. Cf. Lechler's "John Wycliffe", 2.
- (3) "Literal, allegorik, moral and anagogik"-Wyclif
- (4) Deanesly, "A History of the Medieval Church", 232-233

doctrines of the Roman Church"; (1) and will also show that "He (Wyclif) controverted every doctrine he considered mistaken, and advocated every doctrine he considered true, not so much for the sake of the doctrine itself as for the sake of the doctrine's effect upon the spiritual condition of those who held it". (2) Basically his views of the sacraments had to be doctrinal views. I have tried to state honestly and succinctly the facts as I have found them, giving a number of quotations both from the Latin and the English works (3) of the Reformer, since the full force of the argument is seen more readily by having the choicest statements immediately before us. I trust that their number does not militate too much against the unity of the thought as it is developed.

The general plan of the thesis is as follows: (A) An understanding of the man; which is set forth in a very brief biographical section, and in a section which treats of the factors which contributed to his development; (B) An understanding of the sacraments (in general) of the Roman Catholic Church, with their historical background to Wyclif's day; (C) An understanding of the Reformer's views of the sacraments of the Church, each of the seven being discussed separately; and (D) An understanding of the Reformer's legacy to the world because of his doctrines and his deeds.

Realizing that there is grave danger of eulogizing so prominent a person as Wyclif, I have purposely endeavored to refrain from such language in the course of this work; and if there should be portions where I seem to indulge in anything akin to eulogy, the reader will remember that I have written only that which is my firm conviction concerning the Reformer,

- (1) Herbert Cowell-"The Character and Place of Wicliffe as a Reformer", 25 (Stanhope Prize Essay)
- (2) H.W.Clark, "History of English Non-Conformity, I, 67
- (3) The English are much inferior to the Latin works both in bulk and importance.

and which is supported by satisfactory evidence.

I have purposely used the term "Church of Rome", realizing that this distinguishing term did not come into common usage until the Reformation. Yet Wyclif himself employed it on many occasions,(1) which is something of a justification for its appearance here. It has also been necessary to use it to distinguish the Church of Rome from the Greek Orthodox and the Celtic Churches, so that no confusion would arise.

For consistency I have employed American spellings throughout the dissertation. From the amazing number of ways to spell the Reformer's name (see Appendix A) I have chosen the popular and convenient "Wyclif", except where quotations have been given, and there I have tried to be true to the original.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the very efficient guidance which I have received from my two professorial advisors, the Reverend Professor John H. S. Burleigh, D.D. and the Reverend Professor Hugh Watt, D.D., during the preparation of this thesis; also to express my gratitude and thanks for the kind service rendered me by the following individuals, a few unseen, from whose libraries I have gleaned the information recorded in this work:

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(1) e.g. De Ecclesia, 14; 44; De Pot. Pape, 405;
De Ver. Sac. Scrip., 350, etc.

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CHAPTER ONE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

It is not the purpose of this work to give a full account of the life of Wyclif, yet a correct understanding of the man can come only through some knowledge of the facts of his life. We shall, therefore, endeavor to set forth briefly the main facts of the Reformer's life, showing the progress of his thought, and the time of his accepted writings. Fuller treatment will be given to the main factors contributing to his intellectual and spiritual development in the chapter to follow. Owing to the great number of works consulted in the preparation of this section, (1) we will not indicate page references from them.

It has seemed advisable, for the purposes of clarity and convenience, to divide the biography of John Wyclif (2) into four periods. These divisions of the Reformer's life seem to be more natural than arbitrary, since they are characterized by preparation, pedagogy, patriotism and polemics. They are as follows:

- I. From Birth to Master of Balliol, 1324-60
"A Preparing Churchman"
- II. From Master of Balliol to Council of Bruges, 1360-74. "A Pedagogical Churchman"
- III. From Council of Bruges to Parliament of Gloucester, 1374-78. "A Patriotic Churchman"
- IV. From Parliament of Gloucester to His Death, 1378-84. "A Polemic Churchman"

It may be further stated that the justification for such a division will become apparent in the pages to follow.

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- (1) See Bibliography. The leading biographers are: Workman, Lechler, Lewis, Matthew, Hearnshaw, Rashdall, Poole, Vaughan, and Buddensieg.
- (2) See Appendix A for various spellings of the name.

I. Great difficulties confront the scholar who endeavors to determine with accuracy the facts of John Wyclif's early life. Nearly all events here seem to be clouded with mystery and ambiguity, but it appears from a statement by Leland that John Wyclif was "borne at Spreswell, a poore village a good myle from Richemont" in the North Riding of Yorkshire. The date cannot be fixed with certainty, although the marriage date of his parents is known to be 1319; and with this confirmatory evidence, coupled with the knowledge that John was the eldest child, Lewis "guesses" at 1324 for the birth of the Reformer. A guiding light is found in Wyclif's own statement in 1382 that he was "in fine dierum nostrorum", although no one ~~one~~ knows the Reformer's age at the time of his death a little more than a year later, 1384. Some scholars-- for example, Hearnshaw and Matthew-- date his birth as early as 1320; others-- for example, Workman and Buddensieg-- place it as late as 1328, or following. Perhaps the most widely accepted date of 1324 is an acceptable medium between the two extremes.(1)

The Wyclif family, of early Saxon origin-- probably of some Scandinavian admixture-- was of the aristocracy of that section of the North Riding, poor but proud, and holding in their possession the family home of Wyclif Manor, an estate of some seven hundred and twenty acres. It is interesting to note that they clung tenaciously to the Roman Church, even in the later years of the triumph of the Reformer's doctrines. The son John, in all probability, received his earliest instruction

(1) Vaughan makes a rather surprising statement, "The biographers of Wycliffe all mention the year 1324 as that of his birth". (Tracts and Treatises, p.i) Also Böhlinger, "Als das Jahr der Geburt W's. haben alle 1324 angenommen". (Johann von Wykliffe, p.7) Both the monument in Lutterworth Church and obelisk in the town, which I have seen, bear the date 1324. See Appendix B.

from some primary school of the Church, with some member of the clerical body-- likely the parish priest-- as his teacher. In these tender years he would show his inclination to the Church, and with the priesthood before him, it was necessary that he seek a university education. So at the early age of fifteen to sixteen he went to Oxford, the school of the greatest reputation in his day, and with which he was to be so closely identified until the end of his life. It is within the realm of probability that he was a hearer of such outstanding men as Thomas Bradwardine and Richard Fitzralph during his early years here, but of this we cannot be certain. Confusion is still with us, for no less than three colleges at Oxford claim Wyclif-- Merton, Balliol and Queen's. And to make matters even more puzzling, there appear to have been in Oxford about the middle of the fourteenth century three students bearing the name of "John Wyclif"! The confused threads of history, in relation to the minor incidents in the lives of these three, have yet to be disentangled.

What young Wyclif studied, and for how long, can only be assumed from a general knowledge of the university of that day. He would complete the "Trivium"(grammar, dialectics and rhetoric), and then the "Quadrivium"(arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music); and after having shown his natural aptitude for logic and dialectic he would pass on to the study of theology. Altogether these courses would comprise at least ten to twelve years of study, and probably more since there were the interruptions of the horrible scourge, the Black Death-- 1349 and again in 1361-- and the riots at Oxford between "town" and "gown" in 1355. It was unfortunate that theology then had so

little to do with the Bible, for in the words of Foxe, "There was no mention nor almost any word spoken of Scripture. Instead of Peter and Paul, men occupied their time in studying Aquinas and Scotus, and the Master of the Sentences". But Bradwardine had already taught Wyclif the use of the Scriptures; and now the ravages of the plague brought him to the Bible a second time, and from it he found his weapons to combat the superstitions of his day.

One of the earliest accepted dates concerning the Reformer is that of 1353, when his father died, at which time, along with his mother, John assumed control of the manor and patronage of the living. The next date of foundation is 1360, when Wyclif is Master at Balliol in Oxford. In these intervening years from his birth, about all that we can conclude is that they were fruitful years of preparation for the oncoming struggle. One date, however, must not be overlooked, and that is 1342, when John of Gaunt, later the Duke of Lancaster, became over-lord of the district of Richmond, which fact was not without its subsequent results. Wyclif was then certainly at Oxford, and the incident would mean little to him at the time, but it was destined to mean much in the way of protection to the Reformer during the years of his bitterest opposition.

II. As we have already suggested, this period (1360-74) finds Wyclif a teacher at Oxford. For some twenty years he had studied, "determined", and lectured here in this university center of culture, until his intellectual zeal and devotion to the truth were honored by his being chosen Master of Balliol. How long he held this honored position is a matter of conjecture, but evidently not for long; for on May 14, 1361

he was nominated by his college as rector of Fillingham in Lincolnshire. These were days of financial stress for all, due to the havoc wrought by the recurring plague, and the tempest of 1361. It was probably due to stringent circumstances that we find Wyclif was appointed by Pope Urban V to a prebend in the collegiate Church of Westbury-on-Trym, near Bristol. Historians have bitterly condemned the Reformer for this prebend of Aust, implying that he was guilty of accepting a plurality, which principle he later condemned so severely. Just what the fair answer is to this seeming incongruity in Wyclif's life, history has yet to reveal.

However, the great mind of the Reformer was destined to rise to higher things. In 1363 he obtained a leave of absence from his parish at Fillingham in order to pursue further study at Oxford. Lest he be bothered with temporal things, he resigned his living of Wycliffe, presenting it to one William de Wycliffe, and then took up residence at Queen's College, Oxford. From all the confused sources of information available, it appears that he later, in 1365, was appointed Warden of Canterbury Hall, a newly formed project of Archbishop Islip in which twelve young men were preparing for the priesthood. From this Wardenship Wyclif was later deposed, through no fault of his own as far as we can see. He appealed to Rome, but the delayed answer of the Pope was unfavorable. Some have erroneously assumed that this incident marks the genesis of Wyclif's later energetic assaults upon Rome, the usurped power of the papal curia, and monasticism in general. It is only natural that such an incident may have had some influence upon him, though probably a minor one.

It was in this period of his life that a significant event occurred when Pope Urban V, in 1365, demanded of the

English Parliament the payment not only of the Peter's Pence, but also the annual tribute of one thousand marks, as promised by King John in 1213 at the time of his humiliation. All tribute in arrears was to be paid, which included from July 7, 1333, or the threat of proceedings in the papal court would have to be faced. In defiance to this demand Parliament agreed to pay no tribute, which refusal resulted in an open breach between England and Rome. Rapidly parties were formed of those agreeing with the Parliament, and of those agreeing with the Pope. The great question of loyalty to the Church and to the State arose, and feeling ran high as to which claim was superior. It was this situation which led Wyclif to enter the service of the Crown, and later to write two of his great works on civil and divine dominion, "De Civili Dominio" and "De Dominio Divino".

Realizing that he could not pursue study and at the same time give personal attention to a distant parish, Wyclif in 1368 exchanged his Lincolnshire rectory for Ludgershall in Buckinghamshire, sixteen miles from Oxford. A noticeable loss of income was involved-- ten marks a year instead of thirty-- but he was compensated by being near the university for study, and by the conscientious desire to keep pastoral oversight of his flock, a ministry which always characterized his career as a parish priest.

Following the demand of Urban in regard to tribute, and the removal of Wyclif from Canterbury Hall as Warden, we see the Reformer obtaining further license to continue his studies at Oxford. Here in 1369 he took his Bachelor of Divinity degree, and soon afterward began his "Sententiary" lectures. His mental genius was ever on the alert for injustice to truth and logic, and already by 1370 he had entertained doubts as to the Church's

doctrine of the Eucharist. Although privileged now as a lecturer to broadcast his views before the university, Wyclif does not appear to do so until a later date. He continued his studies, obtaining the Doctorate (D.D.) in 1372, about which time he entered the service of the Crown. As a reward for his services rendered in this capacity, he was appointed by the Crown to the rectory of Lutterworth, which he held until his death.

III. Wyclif belongs to the noble band of English ecclesiastical statesmen, represented by such men as Saint Dunstan, William of Wykeham, Walter de Merton and Cardinal Wolsey. Although it may be said that he was in the service of the Crown prior to 1374, it is really not until this date that he began his prominent political career. His versatile mind had already been well trained in Roman, English and ecclesiastical law; and with this in mind the King appointed him as a qualified "*peculiaris regis clericus*". Lechler and Innis maintain that he was a member of Parliament as early as 1376 (perhaps even earlier), and therefore a member of the Good Parliament. In his new political capacity he had ample opportunity to show that national loyalty must be consistent with the Christian faith, which he endeavored to prove by his continual appeal to the Scriptures as the highest and best expression of all law.

It is in this period that Wyclif was appointed by the King a member of a royal commission to confer at Bruges with representatives of the Pope, the object of the conference being to consider the question of tribute to Rome, and the papal right to interfere with Church appointments in England. The leader of the purely political embassy to Bruges, meeting at

the same time, was John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, which is somewhat significant, since here the Reformer would make his first personal contacts with his subsequent protector. The result of the parley was not successful, very little being accomplished by either side. But it gave to Wyclif some important schooling, for he saw here at first hand the covetous workings of the hierarchy of Rome. He returned to Britain somewhat disillusioned, but determined to preach and teach against the abuses of the papal court. Upon retiring to Oxford he entered the arena as the champion of the rights of the English King and people against the papacy and the Church, by beginning his vast "Summa", a work of many parts in which he tried to make clear the foundations of his thinking upon which subsequent action must rest. He published in the following month his "De Mandatis" and "De Dominio Determinatio contra Unum Monachum", the latter being a report of some parliamentary debate, which is generally held to be Wyclif's creation rather than the actual proceedings of Parliament. These works were followed by "De Dominio Divino" and "De Dominio Civili" in 1375-76, which were enlargements of the lectures given his students at Oxford, in which he set forth the universal lordship of the righteous, denied the papal suzerainty in England, attacked the worldly possessions of the clergy, asserted that the Pope was tenant of the King and guilty of simony in exacting tribute from King John. These works were "full of dynamite" for his day, and it is not surprising to find that the hierarchy soon sought to bring Wyclif to judgment, just at the height of his political career.

In February, 1377, Wyclif was summoned for trial in St. Paul's Cathedral before the Bishop of London, William Courtenay. Just what the specific charges were is not known,

but one source ironically states "To explain the wonderful things which had streamed forth from his mouth". Due to the presence of the Duke of Lancaster and the Earl Marshall, with a company of armed men to protect the prisoner, this gathering in the Lady Chapel ended quickly in tumult, and the court pronounced no judgment upon Wyclif. The learned doctor then returned to Oxford, where he continued to be the public idol.

The papal authorities, however, were determined in their efforts to bring him to trial. In the following May Pope Gregory XI issued five bulls against Wyclif, addressed to the bishops of Canterbury and London, to the King, and to the University of Oxford. Two of these bulls charged heresy, which charge was aimed at his political influence as much as at his doctrines, although nineteen articles of his writings were at this time condemned. It was a well-laid plan to place the Reformer in the Pope's power, and to introduce the papal Inquisition of the Continent into England. But the papal commissioners understood too well the temper of the English people to press the harsh measures of the bulls, and this, with the death of Edward III in June 1377, caused the proceedings against the Oxford teacher to be delayed for several months. However, in March 1378 Wyclif was summoned to appear at the episcopal palace at Lambeth to defend himself. Again no judgment was pronounced, due to the gathering of a noisy mob outside the palace, and to the intercession of the Queen-mother forbidding the assembled court to pass sentence on the accused. As a parting thrust the prelates commanded him to keep silent in respect to his views, an injunction which he did not heed.

Wyclif is best known to-day for his reforming work of translating the Bible into the English language. It is not

surprising, therefore, at this time when he was so vitally concerned with the questions of the authority of the Church and the State, to find him at work on a treatise concerning the authority of the Bible, "De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae", which work no doubt proved to him the absolute necessity for the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular. Indeed, the sharper the conflict between him and the papacy, the more recourse did he have to the message of God's Word. From his facile pen there now came the writings of "Protestatio", "Libellus" and the "Thirty-Three Conclusions on the Poverty of Christ". These reveal that his intellectual genius was now ready to challenge the authority of Rome in matters of State. He saw clearly the irreconcilable antagonism between himself and the clerical oligarchy, which antagonism furnishes largely the key to the political and religious history of that day. Action against him was frustrated by the death of Pope Gregory XI, following which the papacy was plunged into the Great Schism (1378-1418), a veritable "orgy of recrimination and vituperation by two contenders", Urban VI and Clement VII, of which no equal appears in all the annals of religious history. The Gregorian idea of the unity of the Church was irrevocably gone.

The growing animosity between Wyclif and the papal party was heightened by the unfortunate violation of sanctuary privilege in Westminster Abbey by certain soldiers, which outrage resolved itself into a definite struggle between Church and State. Haulay and Shakyl, two fugitives from justice, were caught at the Abbey, one of whom was arrested, the other killed with a sacristan at St. Edward's shrine. Wyclif appeared in October, 1378 before the Parliament in Gloucester in defense of

the Crown's action, stating that fugitives were offenders against the law of God, the Church and the State; and that the Church must not become a patron to crime by harboring wrongdoers. So important did Wyclif consider the principles at stake that he incorporated his message in his work "De Ecclesia", which was published shortly afterwards. We see him now thoroughly aroused, expressing openly the foundations of civil rights, and urging on the principle of the highest good for all that independence from Rome be maintained. In no way does he condone the awful murder in the Abbey; yet his relentless logic leads him to an open break with Rome, to abandon politics, and to take his final militant stand against the evils of the Church. He is ready now to become a polemic Churchman.

IV. Great changes do not always come rapidly, but there can be no doubt that the Parliament of Gloucester marked a definite change in the life of Wyclif, and it was a great day for England and the world when this Oxford scholar turned more seriously than ever before to the study of theology. Disgusted by the opposing claims of the rival Popes, and by the insistence of a corrupt Church to domineer in the affairs of State, Wyclif retired from public life to prove by his writings the urgent need of reform. So long as he was known only as a scholar, the world respected him; when at a later period he came forth as a statesman, the world honored him; but when he took up a third character, and began to try to make the world a little better than he found it, then the world of his day could not forgive him. He issued in rapid succession his "De Ecclesia" and "De Officio Regis" in the winter of 1378, followed by "De Potestate Papae" and "De Ordine Christiano" the following spring.

These reveal the extent of his revolt against Rome, and his deep-seated conviction that the papacy was a limb of Antichrist. His reasoning went from universals to particulars; from Dominion to a doctrine of the Church, which inevitably led him to focus his attention on the sacraments.

In the summer of 1379 he began his controversy with the friars concerning the Eucharist, expressing his opinions a little later in "De Apostasia" and "De Eucharistia", and showing that his doubts of transubstantiation, nurtured now for nine years, had come to maturity. At Oxford he continued to lecture, always making known his opinions to his students, and supporting those views which he advocated with strong Scriptural proof. But all was not controversy, for with the help of his followers, especially Hereford and Purvey, he began in the spring of 1380 the translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into the English vernacular.

The same spring brought open condemnation at Oxford, which university was now divided into two camps concerning the doctrine of the Eucharist. It was an issue of nominalism versus realism; the former was held by the monks and friars, the latter by Wyclif and some of the secular clergy. The regular clergy had been attacked by Wyclif as to their abuses in the ministry, and their "heresy" in their accident-theory of the Eucharist. Hence they were naturally opposed to the Reformer. In the spring of 1380 the Chancellor of Oxford, William de Bertom, a former antagonist of Wyclif, summoned a council of twelve doctors of the University to consider Wyclif's teachings concerning the Eucharist. The council, selected because of their hostile views to the Reformer's teachings, quite naturally condemned his main propositions on the sacrament of the altar, although by the bare majority of seven votes to five. They singled out his statement

that Christ was present in the sacrament "figuratively or tropically, not truly in His own corporal person", and counted this, with another article, sufficient grounds for the charge of heresy, forbidding him to teach, hold or defend his views of this sacrament in Oxford or in any school under pain of suspension, imprisonment or even excommunication. This condemnation was unexpectedly read in the classroom in Wyclif's presence, much to his embarrassment, but without any success in getting him to modify his views.

Wyclif broke precedent by appealing to the King, but the King at that time could not render an answer because of his need of the Church's financial and temporal assistance in carrying on foreign wars. The Duke of Lancaster came to Oxford and requested that Wyclif keep silent on sacramental views, since the papal influence at the moment in the royal court was much stronger than before. This request did not meet with the Oxford don's approval, whereupon the Duke, angered by the refusal of Wyclif, withdrew his temporal support and protection, and left the Reformer to stand alone against the possible violence of the Church.

Wyclif now withdrew from Oxford to a quiet life at Lutterworth, having first published his "Confessio", a Latin defence of his views, which was subsequently used as material for another attack against him; and also the popular English tract, "The Wicket", which was a re-statement in a sermon of his views concerning the Eucharist.

Unfortunately the uprising in May, 1381, known as the Peasants' Revolt, brought renewed trouble. The smoldering mass of discontent in England needed but a spark to burst into flame, and that came with the levying of an increased poll tax.

Nearly the whole of south England was in a state of rebellion. The many adversaries of Wyclif chose to connect this insurrection with himself and his doctrine, calling him the intellectual ringleader of the revolt. But the social conditions of the people were such that no theological incentives were needed to stir up rebellion. Wyclif cannot justly be accused as the author, although his enemies tried to place this responsibility upon him, hoping ~~that~~ by so doing to gain greater favor with the papacy, and greater disfavor for the Reformer. It is true that Wyclif defended the rights of the laboring classes, although his "Servants and Lords" did not appear until after the revolt had collapsed. The outcome of this Peasants' Revolt is hard to determine, but it unquestionably injured the cause of the Reformer. The quarreling clergy were now united against him; the Church could enlist the support of the State in crushing heresy which led to open rebellion; Wyclif was looked upon no longer as a national idol, but as a sower of strife.

In March, 1382, when national feeling still ran high, Wyclif published his "De Blasphemia", which was another bitter attack against the Church. Held as he was under condemnation for his teachings, and suspected of provoking revolt among the peasants, Wyclif appealed to Parliament in May, publishing his "Complaint" which set forth the issues of the day; but unfortunately his appeal brought forth no official response. It was only a fortnight until more condemnation awaited him in the Synod of Blackfriars.

In the discontent of the times Archbishop Sudbury had been murdered, and in his place was consecrated William Courtenay, Bishop of London, and arch enemy of Wyclif. It was

left to this zealous ecclesiastic to inaugurate the final movements against the Oxford Reformer. The archbishop's pallium was not received from Rome until May 6, 1382, but upon its arrival he immediately started proceedings by calling together a picked council of men. From available accounts the body seems to have consisted of nine bishops, sixteen doctors of theology, eleven doctors of laws, seven bachelors of theology, and two bachelors of laws, and it was called to meet in Blackfriars Hall, London. The court was deliberately "packed", all of the individuals composing it being men of strict Roman orthodoxy, and vigorous opponents of Wyclif. Wyclif himself was not summoned to appear, and therefore could make no defense. The court proceeded to examine the Reformer's writings, choosing twenty-four propositions which were questionable. The Synod had hardly entered the fifth day of discussion when a terrible earthquake shook the city, and in fear some of the bishops desired to adjourn the court. But Courtenay, in spite of the so-called evil omen, proclaimed it an emblem of purification, the shock being a sign of the purging of the realm from heresies. The sessions continued until the archbishop had secured the condemnation of the twenty-four theses of the Reformer, ten being considered as heretical, and fourteen as erroneous.

A week passed, which gave Courtenay time to enlist the aid of the secular authority to enforce his pleasures, and then he made public the decisions. But the Commons had not approved the pretended authority of Courtenay to arrest and imprison all Lollards, this decree having been granted by the King only after Parliament had adjourned. This shows the cunning of Courtenay, stooping to a disguise at law, which in reality

carried with it no authority. But the archbishop had here overreached himself, for the antagonism of the Commons was aroused, and Parliament soon met to rescind the "pretended statute", securing the King's signature to the rescinded enactment, although by some shrewd chicanery on the part of the ecclesiastical group the record of this repeal was never entered on the rolls.

Courtenay, with a royal decree and the decisions of the Blackfriars Synod in his possession, felt that he could continue the inquisition. Copies of the condemned theses were sent to every parish, so that all the clergy would be further prejudiced against Wyclif. The next step was to carry the attack to Oxford, where in the archbishop's eyes Chancellor Rigg was showing too much sympathy with the Lollards. Warnings were sent the University, to which Rigg replied by asserting the University rights. Philip Repington, a Lollard, was chosen to preach the "most important sermon of the year" at St. Frideswyde's on the coming feast of Corpus Christi; which choice almost foretold an attack on transubstantiation, despite the publicity of the condemned articles of Wyclif. For this sympathetic attitude towards Lollardy Rigg was summoned to a second gathering of the Synod of Blackfriars, where in the presence of the ecclesiastics he found it necessary to yield, giving his assent at last to the condemnation of the twenty-four articles of Wyclif. On the following day the Chancellor yielded to the injunctions of the Privy Council concerning orthodox behavior at the University. Returning to Oxford Rigg suspended Repington and Hereford, and within the next few days these friends of Wyclif were condemned at a third Synod at Blackfriars.

In all these manoueuvers Courtenay seemed to be gaining the upper hand. Hereford and Repington were summoned before him, and excommunicated, the former escaping to Rome, and the latter recanting along with some of the other Lollard leaders. Throughout all this period of condemnation, with the archbishop determined to stamp out "heresy" in the regions of Oxford, it seems almost incredible that Wyclif was never molested. His followers were persecuted, but the Church never once laid her hand on the leader whose teachings she so bitterly condemned. As long as the Reformer kept away from Oxford he was left quietly alone. Some have believed -- e.g. Knighton and Wood-- that this freedom was given him because of an ambiguous recantation of his views before the Synod of Oxford in November, 1382, which is an explanation without basis of fact. No record of any such action appears in the minutes, or other official documents, of the Synod-- a fact which certainly would have been recorded at some length had it been true. Principal Workman endeavors to explain the mystery of the Reformer's freedom by the pure conjecture of an agreement between Courtenay and the Duke of Lancaster-- namely, that if Wyclif were forced to leave Oxford, no personal harm would come to him in Lutterworth.

In the quiet, closing days of his life the rector of Lutterworth was remarkably active, especially for one who had been physically handicapped by a minor stroke of paralysis. Never was his pen more prolific than in this period. It was in the autumn of 1382 that he published the first version of the Bible in the English vernacular, which version, however, is not entirely to be attributed to him, as we have already seen. In the same autumn he published his "Trialogus" (see Appendix C), a Latin

compendium of his final theological views, and a very effective polemic, the importance of which is seen in that it was the first of his writings to be printed. To it scholars have frequent recourse for material which represents the maturer theological position of the Reformer. Other writings came rapidly, for he seemed to sense that his time was short; and by tract, homily, published sermon, or major treatise he was determined that the cause of evangelical truth should be made known.

Toward the close of 1382 Bishop Spencer of Norwich formally launched his Crusade against the anti-pope, Clement VII, making it a medieval mixture of religious and political motives. Against this Crusade and its attendant evils Wyclif raised his voice in no uncertain terms. The slaughter of the people, the granting of plenary indulgences to enlist men to go, the participation in the horrors of war by the clergy, etc. aroused the Reformer's indignation, and he bitterly attacked the whole affair as a scheme of unrighteousness. The Crusade proved to be a failure, perhaps to the great joy of Wyclif.

Throughout his closing days the Rector of Lutterworth was never entirely free from the fear of death by violence. His statements may be found which show that he expected martyrdom, which fortunately never came. He knew that Gregory's citation for him to appear at Rome still hung over his head, the legality of which he questioned in his tract "De Citationibus Frivolis". He further excused himself on the grounds of ill health, for his "emaciated frame, spare and well nigh destitute of strength" could not stand the strain of a long journey. His infirmities had already compelled him to employ for some time the services of John Horn as curate. Slowly the paralysis crept

upon the Reformer, and suffering a second stroke on December 28th while hearing mass in his Church at Lutterworth, he died in peace on December 31, 1384.

Although he was a leader of opposition to the Church in life, death found him officially uncondemned. He was given the burial of the Church, and his remains were laid to rest probably in the chancel of the Church which he had served so faithfully for over ten years. However, Wyclif's enemies did not suffer his body to lie undisturbed in the grave. At the Council of Constance (1415) his works were condemned on no less than two hundred and sixty counts, and ordered to be burned; and his bones to be dug up and cast out of consecrated ground. The latter part of this decree was not carried out until the spring of 1428, when by order of the Pope, Bishop Fleming had Wyclif's bones disinterred, burned to ashes, and cast into the waters of the river Swift, in the words of Netter, "to the damnation and destruction of his memory. His vile corpse they consigned to hell, and the river absorbed his ashes". But how much more fittingly does Fuller prophesy that his memory was not destroyed when he says, in the quaint but familiar words: "Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into the Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wicliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over".(1) And almost equally familiar is the verdict of Milton: "Had it not been the perverseness of our prelates against the divine and admirable spirit of Wycliffe, to suppress him as a schismatic and

(1) Fuller, Church History, II, 424 (1845 edition)

innovator, perhaps neither the Bohemian Husse and Jerome-- no, nor the name of Luther or of Calvin-- had ever been known: the glory of reforming all our neighbors had been completely ours".(1)

"Once more the Church is seized with sudden fear,
 And at her call is Wyclif disinhumed:
 Yea, his dry bones to ashes are consumed
 And flung into the brook that travels near;
 Forthwith, that ancient Voice, which streams can hear,
 Thus speaks (that Voice which walks upon the wind,
 Though seldom heard by busy human-kind)--
 'As thou these ashes, little Brook! wilt bear
 Into the Avon, Avon to the tide
 Of Severn, Severn to the narrow seas,
 Into main Ocean they, this deed accurst
 As emblems yield to friends and enemies
 How the bold Teacher's Doctrine, sanctified
 By truth, shall spread, throughout the world dispersed!"

(2)

"But holy ashes have bestrewn thy stream
 Under the mingled gleam
 Of swords and torches, and the chant of Rome,
 When Wyclif's lowly tomb
 Through its thick briars was burst
 By frantic priests accurst;
 For he had entered and laid bare the lies
 That pave the labryinth of their mysteries." (3)

(1) "Areopagitica"- Milton's Prose Works, II, 91
 (Bohn's edition)

(2) William Wordsworth-- "Ecclesiastical Sonnets".

(3) Walter Savage Landor-- "On Swift joining Avon near Rugby".

CHAPTER T W O

IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTING FACTORS
IN WYCLIF'S DEVELOPMENT

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The mere relating of major biographical incidents in the life of John Wyclif is not sufficient for a proper and adequate understanding of the man. We need as well to trace further the influences which made him the liberal thinker, the champion of movements for reform, the "morning star" which heralded the coming of the dawn. We shall here endeavor to trace these influences as briefly as their importance will allow.

Until comparatively recent years it has been the common error of scholarship to look upon Wyclif as one who stood before the world of his day with a complete and unified system of thought right from the start. Rash judgment has been pronounced upon him simply because proper allowance was not made for a gradual intellectual and spiritual development in the man himself. Being human, he did not spring full-grown from birth, but went through varying stages of mental growth, until we see him the mature Reformer. Unquestionably much of this misjudgment of the man was due to the early printing of his "Trialogus", and from a knowledge of this work critics jumped to the hasty conclusion that the man had held these maturer theological views all through life. Such assumption was greatly in error, doing injustice not only to the scholarship of his critics, but also to Wyclif himself. Now that the dates of his best accepted works are more generally fixed, this error is not likely to reoccur, for we can now trace the stages of his mental and spiritual development, with their consequent theological

ramifications. We can see that one after another of the chains of Roman superstition are broken, and the Reformer comes at last into the marvelous light and liberty of truth-- at least for his own day. Stages of his own emancipation are expressly mentioned by Wyclif when he says that philosophically he had defended opinions the very reverse of those afterward maintained; and that once he was sunk in the depths of the sea, and had stammered out many things which he was unable to establish.(1) Again he says in an obscure writing:

"Other statements which at one time appeared strange to me, now appear to me to be sound and true, and I defend them: for when I was a child in the knowledge of faith, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child; but when in God's grace I became a man, I put away by His grace childish thoughts." (2)

Such is sufficient to prove on his own authority that he changed opinions, and as maturity came he arrived at conclusions essentially different from those of his immature years.

What were the important contributing factors to such a progressive development? Many might be mentioned, but we shall pause to consider only those that were unquestionably the most important in their influence upon the Reformer. Of these, in our opinion, six should suffice: namely, the liberal atmosphere of Oxford University, the corrupt state of the Church, the great Papal Schism, the mission to Bruges, the occurrence of the Black Death, and the influence of great ecclesiastical personalities.

I. The wholesome, liberal atmosphere of Oxford University certainly had its part in helping to mold the thought life of this Oxford Reformer. Along with the University

(1) Trialogus, I, X, 69; III, VIII, 155

(2) Responsiones ad argumenta Radulphi de Strude- Vienna Ms. 1338, fol. 116, col.3(quoted from Lechler, 224)

of Paris this institution ranked as the best of its day, priding itself as the intellectual center of England, and the place of independent thought. Here the orthodox conservatism of Rome had never been able to dominate. Great freedom of speech was allowed in the class discussions, or "determinations". The student life was in reality divided into two "nations", the North ("Borealis") following much of the realism of Duns Scotus, the South ("Australes") following the moderate realism of Thomas Aquinas. Politically the sympathies of the "Borealis" were with the King; those of the "Australes" with the Pope. Wyclif, being from Yorkshire, quite naturally threw in his lot with the Northmen, and doubtless this early alliance at Oxford strengthened him in his later advocacy of the regime of the King and Parliament as opposed to papal supremacy in England. One wonders whether this natural carry-over of his allegiance of student days did not count for a great deal, grounded of course on the firm foundation of logical reasoning and Scripture. Are we anticipating too much when we say that here in this university center were implanted the seed germs of thought, both in philosophical realism and in principles of nationalism, which bore fruit in his later ecclesiastical and civil policies for reform? We think not, for surely it was in this center of culture that he learned to unite the love of truth with the free spirit of action and clerical independence. To Oxford's liberal atmosphere, therefore, Wyclif owed much for his own subsequent liberal thought and rugged individualism.

II. Again, the corrupt state of the Church was a contributing factor in the development of the Reformer. Here, however, we need to note that Wyclif in his earlier years was

first a scholar and then a Churchman. His reasoning, like that of most of the Schoolmen, was not so much from specific facts as it was from great principles. To observe and then deduce was too humble an occupation for the great intellects of this age. Thus, in connection with the Church, he reasoned from great truths, and then sought to test the Church by these standards, or criteria. This is why Wyclif was a scholar before he was a reformer, and why his period of pedagogy preceded the period of polemics.

To Wyclif the Church, under the papal domination, had lost her pristine glory and purity. Selfishness characterized the leaders instead of the spirit of sacrifice. Orders founded on the principles of poverty had grown lavishly rich, with the monks and the friars living in luxury. Instead of spiritual power the Church sought temporal power. Her theology was fashioned so that her ambitious desires might be attained. Dogmas, rites, institutions, orders, etc. became so many pretexts for extracting money, and often from those who could ill afford it; while images, relics, pilgrimages, purgatory, indulgences, jubilees, masses, and what-not were but methods of ecclesiastical taxation, draining the people of their gold so that the coffers of the papacy might be enriched. Little was given in return, and as long as these abuses continued the power of the King was weakened, the jurisdiction of the courts was invaded, and the national exchequer was impoverished. Churches were becoming dilapidated, the gospel was not being enthusiastically preached, and public worship was everywhere being neglected in this part of England. The clergy no longer commanded respect, being ignorant, selfish, and often dissolute.

Instead of being actively engaged in the service of God, they were intentionally or unintentionally in the service of mammon.

The powerful heads of the Church silently sanctioned this inward corruption. A system had virtually grown in which the invisible Christ was not a sufficient Head of the Church, for the papal system had introduced the power of the keys with the Pope at the head, followed by cardinals, archbishops, bishops, prelates, etc.-- a hierarchy on earth to correspond with the hierarchy in heaven. Roman imperialism had cast its cloak upon the Church, giving to tradition and authority a despotic control of all the intellectual activity of the day, while the authority of the Scriptures was ignored. But the pendulum in due time was destined to swing in the other direction. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries introduced a revival of learning, and with this greater freedom which comes with knowledge, there came many doubts as to the doctrines, government, discipline and life of the Roman Church. In fact men began to question the whole foundation of the papal system. It is only natural that following the Renaissance there should be a Reformation. And as to others, especially to John Wyclif came the call of truth and conscience, and Oxford's most astute logician and the most learned man in England (1) raised his cry of protest against the corruption and usurpations of a foreign potentate with his horde of greedy cardinals. The Reformer based his protest upon a constant appeal to the Scriptures, upon which the Church had at first been founded, and from which she in her material glory had so far strayed.

(1) Knighton ii, 151 states an opponent's estimate of Wyclif: "the most eminent doctor of theology of his times, in philosophy second to none, in the training of the schools without rival".

III. In connection with this Churchly corruption, and indeed growing out of it, there came the great Papal Schism of 1378, which event became a momentous turning-point in the development of Wyclif's convictions and in his position as a Reformer. (1) Hitherto in all ecclesiastico-political questions Wyclif had recognized the papal primacy within certain limits, but from an early date he had held that the Pope and the cardinals were not absolutely essential to rule the Church:

"Ex istis colligi potest quod nullum papam cum cetu cardinalium citra Christum sit absolute necessarium capitaliter regere ecclesiam sanctam Dei." (2)

It must be admitted that Wyclif believed the error of the donation of Constantine, (3) and early held that the Bishop of Rome was endowed with a superior power, and was elevated above the other bishops of the universal Church because of this Caesarean grant-- which gradually culminated in the papal primacy. He even speaks of the imperial plenary power of the Pope. (4) As late as the spring of 1378, when Urban VI was elected to the papal chair, we find Wyclif in the spirit of rejoicing, saying:

"Blessed be the Lord, who in these days has given to His Church, in Urban VI, an orthodox head, an evangelical man, one who in the work of reforming the Church, that it may live conformably to the law of Christ, follows the due order by beginning with himself and the members of his own household. From his works, therefore, it behooves us to believe that he is the head of our Church." (5)

But later we must admit that his attitude had drastically

- (1) Cf. Lechler's "John Wycliffe and His English Precursors", 364; also Cadman's "Three Religious Leaders of Oxford", 114-116.
- (2) De Civili Dominio, I, Cap. XLIII, 380
- (3) Opus Minor, 226; De Potestate Papae, X, 227
- (4) Trialogus, IV, Cap. XXXII; Saints' Days Sermons, XL, fol. 81, col. 3. Cf. Lechler, 311.
- (5) De Ecclesia, Cap. II, 37-38

changed, showing a development of his anti-papal position, when he says toward the end of 1378:

"If ever Urban departs from the right way, then is his election a mistaken one; and in this case it would be not a little for the good of the Church to do without both the Popes!" (1)

And again in Middle English he says:

"For men seien that here is the Pope in Avynoun, for he was well chosen; and sum men seien that he is yundir at Rome, for he was first chosen. And no man of bileve, that trowith that Crist is al witti, shulde untrowe that ne Crist tellith here of these dyvysiouns; and that the Pope, that feyneth him viker of Crist, is a greet cause of alle these divisious." (2)

And finally from a somewhat neutral position Wyclif became uncompromising in his attitude against the papacy, claiming that blasphemy was upon the lips of the Popes when they say, "It is our will, so must it be". (3) He dared to call the Pope "Antichrist" (4), "limb of Lucifer" ~~the~~, "a simple idiot who might be a damned devil in hell", "horrible fiend", "heretic" (5). No language seemed too strong to condemn the so-called head of the Church. The Schism thoroughly convinced Wyclif that Rome had betrayed the cause of Christian righteousness on earth instead of fostering and shepherding it. With utter horror he looked upon the disgrace of rival successors to St. Peter's throne frantically issuing excommunications and raising armies against each other. "God hath cloven the heart of Antichrist and made the two parts to fight against each other". His final conclusion was simply this: the papacy is to be rejected because it has rejected Christ. Thus Wyclif in his development had passed through varying stages, revealing attitudes toward the Roman

- (1) I have here relied on Lechler, page 364
- (2) Of Mynystre in the Chirche, Sel. Eng. Wks. II, 402
- (3) Saints Days' Sermons, LVI, fol. 116
- (4) De Potestate Papae, III, 321; many works passim.
- (5) Sermones, III, 59

papacy of sympathy and recognition, of neutrality and toleration, of doubt and disapproval, and finally, after the Schism, of condemnation and rejection.

IV. Another vital factor in contributing to Wyclif's development was his ecclesiastico-political mission to Bruges in July, 1374. This important appointment was quite probably due to the Duke of Lancaster's influence with the Crown. Wyclif left the quiet of the cloister to give his versatile talents in the service of his country, vigorously defending the action of the Parliament in repudiating the papal claim to tribute. He had already set forth the principle that King and Parliament are supreme over ecclesiastics as well as over laymen, and now in Bruges he has the opportunity of testing this principle in regard to the burning question of papal interference in Church appointments in England. As usual, he established first a great principle, and then sought to make its application to life.

Wyclif's position on the commission was an important one, being second in order named, thought undoubtedly first in intellectual ability. His independent mind, zealous for the autonomy of his Church in the home land, must have brought to the negotiating members of the commission some startling conclusions! Here he saw what he could not have seen at home-- the reigning principles of avarice, greed, ambition and hypocrisy in the papal court. He had not the opportunity to see it at Rome, but he concluded very naturally that in the servants he had seen a fair picture of the master; and that the motives of these delegates must be the motives of the papacy. With his eyes thus opened by actual experience to the abuses of the hierarchy, he began upon his return to teach, preach and write against this

spiritual wickedness in high places.

Another influence of this mission was that it showed Wyclif the practical bearing of some of his academic conclusions. It was not enough for him to sit and teach at Oxford; he must be actively engaged in an open battle against papal intrigue and corruption. He was more firmly resolved than ever that his principles of dominion must be put into practice; that Church and State must be separate entities, although of the two the State must be superior, since what temporal power the Church then possessed had almost entirely been usurped. Rome had forfeited all right to dominion because of her corruption, for God gives dominion only to the worthy ("meritum de congruo" as opposed to "meritum de condigno").(1) Thus, when in later life he sought to be the zealous and efficient champion of the people against their foreign oppressors, we can see in practice his intellectual conclusions-- really actions sponsored by his own logic-- the outgrowth of his deep-seated convictions formed at Bruges.

And still further, we see some of the influence of this mission upon his later career through the close association of the Reformer with John of Gaunt. It was in this capacity as plenipotentiary at Bruges that Wyclif came to know personally the Duke, the third son of Edward III. Whether these two had met before is not known-- it is within the realm of probability that they had-- but in Bruges they were certainly very closely associated in the service of the Crown. It is said that "politics makes strange bed-fellows". Such is certainly true

(1) De Dominio Divino, III, Cap. IV, 226; and Sermones, III, Serm. XXXVIII, 315-316; and cf. Lechler's excellent discussion, 283-287.

here, for these two men seem to be the opposite extremes in many ways, yet because of political sympathies Wyclif and the Duke joined hands in opposing the ecclesiastics, and in demanding reform in the Church. They both held that the clergy-- especially the "monks possessioners"-- must be impoverished for the good of both the Church and the State. Different motives, no doubt, prompted these men to reach the same political conclusions, yet it is a matter of great importance to note their similarity of thought, for out of this comparative agreement grew the fact that the Duke of Lancaster in later years became Wyclif's patron and protector. This favor, whether begun in the foreign city of Bruges or not, certainly must have been increased there as the two men came to know each other more intimately. (1)

V. Still another contributing factor in the Reformer's life was the occurrence of the terrible Black Death in England in 1348-1349. This fearful pestilence swept across Europe leaving death and terror in its wake. Historians claim that one-fourth of the population of Europe, and one-half of that of England were stricken by the plague. Wyclif was then a student in Oxford, probably about twenty-five years of age, and as an eye-witness of the ravages of this destructive pestilence he would naturally be deeply impressed. "This visitation of the Almighty sounded like a trumpet of the judgment-day in the heart of Wycliffe". (2) He saw the transiency of life; before his very eyes the human race was slowly fading away, and seemingly nothing could stay the onward march of the fatal plague. What problems must have vexed his soul; what gloom must have haunted

(1) Cf. Lechler, 143-145; Workman, I, passim, esp. 275-284
 (2) D'Aubigne, History of Reformation, Vol. V, 110

him! But sweet are the uses of adversity, for in the time of terror Wyclif sought anew the message of the Bible. The philosophy of the schools did not satisfy him in the time of crisis so to appease the hunger of his own soul in the time of need he searched out the deeper truths revealed in God's Word.⁽¹⁾ Here as a young student he found the answer to the question, "Who shall deliver me from the wrath to come?"; and here his understanding was daily enriched by the sublimest doctrines known to man. In such a way were his intellect and soul more fittingly prepared for the crises to follow; and from his own experience could he later call a turbulent world, ravaged by the plague of sin, to the counsel and comfort of the Word of God which had meant so much to him, but which in his day was being so woefully cast aside and neglected.

VI. And yet perhaps the chief single factor in all of Wyclif's mental and spiritual development was the influence of great personalities upon his character. Mighty men of intellectual and spiritual insight helped to mold the mind and the heart of the Reformer-- some of them as voices of the past, and others as contemporaries of his own earlier life. Of the many outstanding doctors who might be mentioned as having a definite influence upon the thought life of their day, and in particular upon the personal opinions of Wyclif, we pause to mention only the four who are the most outstanding. Here we might dwell at length, but the necessary scope of this treatise demands that we be exceedingly brief.

(1) AURELIUS AUGUSTINE (354-430 A.D.), Bishop of Hippo, and "a philosophical and theological genius of the first order, dominating, like a pyramid, antiquity and the succeeding

(1) Forshall and Madden- The Holy Bible in the Earliest English Versions, Vol. I, pages vii-viii.

ages".(1) Undoubtedly this great Church Father played a part greater than that of any other ecclesiastic in molding the opinions of the Reformer. We must not suppose that Wyclif held the Bishop of Hippo to be infallible, yet he did think of him as knowing the truth better than Plato and Aristotle, as the greatest doctor of the Scriptures, and as one who wrote so perfectly that no errors were found by Wyclif in Augustine's works. (2) Next to the Bible itself Wyclif relied upon this mighty teacher for support in his views, and so consistent was this reliance that Wyclif's pupils at Oxford dubbed him "John, son of Augustine".(3) In his "De Ecclesia" alone Wyclif makes reference to Augustine no fewer than 175 times; and Thomas Netter tells us that in all things Wyclif professed to be a disciple of the great Augustine.(4) It was from the Bishop of Hippo that the Oxford Reformer derived his Trinitarian doctrine, endeavoring to prove it by reason through the use of natural analogies. (5) From Augustine he derived much of his conception of the freedom of the will (in spite of Bradwardine); and out of this philosophical conception of freedom grew his doctrine of the negativity of evil, which philosophically considered, amounted almost to the denial of the reality of evil-- something of a strange inconsistency when we think of Wyclif's realism! Yet for him evil is a defect or negation (6), a privation which exists only as an entity in the intellect (7) -- which was but a revoicing of

- (1) Schaff, Philip- History of the Christian Church--
quoted from the Catholic Encyclopedia, "Augustine".
- (2) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, I, 35-39
- (3) Thomas Walden, Doctrinale Antiq. Fidei, I, c.34: "Sui
discipuli vocabant eum famoso et elato nomine
Joannem Augustini". See Lechler, 262 and note.
- (4) Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 167 (5) Trialogus, I, VI, 54-56
- (6) Trialogus, I, X, 71; and De Mandatis Divinis, X, 92
- (7) See Workman, I, Appendix D, 334-335

Augustine's conception of evil as a "causa deficiens" rather than a "causa efficiens"(1). These very words are used by Wyclif in one of his sermons:

"Non habet causam nisi in quantum sapit bonum, sicut non dicitur esse, sed potius deesse secundum aliam rationem... Nec valet excusatio capta a beato Augustino, quod peccatum non habet causam efficientem sed deficientem." (2)

Also in his doctrine of the fall of man Wyclif adhered quite closely to the learned Latin bishop's position. He, however, strayed from Augustine's belief to the semi-Pelagian view that original sin is not conveyed corporeally, but mentally-- that the "semen generativum" is not the bearer, which is a thought probably borrowed from Aquinas.(3) In this the Reformer seems again to wander from his usual philosophical realism, yet the departure from pure Augustinianism is a minor one of method as to how original sin is conveyed, rather than one as to the basic fact of its existence.

In his conception of the Church Wyclif kept company with Augustine, considering the Church as "the whole body of the elect", an invisible rather than a visible Church. This view was wider than the general conception prevailing in his day, which sought to identify the Church with the clergy; and it was also narrower and more exclusive in that it shut out the hypocritical, insincere clergy. The Reformer's doctrine of election and foreknowledge of the damned was perhaps just as pronounced as was that of Augustine, yet instead of grounding it upon original sin, as does Augustine, he based it exclusively upon the idea of God's omnipotence, and the exercise of His will concerning those

(1) De Civitate Dei, Cap. XII, 7

(2) Sermons for Saints' Days, No. 30.

(3) Aquinas, "Summa Theologia", II, Qu. 83, art. 1.

Compare with Lewald's discussion in "Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie", 1846, p. 517

things that shall come to pass.

Wyclif's appeal to the Scriptures is also a characteristic learned from Augustine (perhaps via Bradwardine). He admired the Latin father because his theology was based both upon reason and the Word of God. In his exegesis Wyclif never entirely was free from Augustine's allegorization, yet he sought to maintain that the literal sense of the Divine revelation was the best-- even attempting at times to identify the allegorical and the literal meanings. (1) As to the number of quotations from learned men employed in Wyclif's writings, Augustine is easily predominant, standing even above the learned Aristotle-- all of which shows the tremendous impact this Latin father made upon the mind of the Oxford professor. We are, therefore, quite justified in concluding that Augustine was most influential in Wyclif's development, and one who unquestionably helped to equip the Reformer with principles of power for his medieval struggles.

(2) ROBERT GROSSETESTE (1175 ?- 1253), the learned and courageous Bishop of Lincoln, and noted expositor of Aristotle, was another who had a noteworthy influence upon Wyclif. His profound fear of God gave him victory over all fear of men-- even to the point of directly opposing the Pope. His remarkable character is seen in that Oxford three times proposed his name for canonization, but failed. There is no writer save Augustine to whose authority Wyclif more frequently appealed. (2) This leading thirteenth century bishop did much to emphasize a return to the Scriptures, which appeal had its marked effects on the Oxford Reformer-- for Wyclif stood not alone in appealing to

(1) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, I, 73, 122; and
Sermones, I, 83

(2) Cf. Workman, I, 115

God's truth; he rather followed in the footsteps of such men as Grosseteste, Ockham, and Fitzralph. And like Grosseteste, Wyclif believed that knowledge of the divine revelation in the Scriptures was absolutely essential for the servants of God and the welfare of the Church. (1)

Grosseteste was a man of action, whose godly solicitude and care for souls made him every inch a bishop. Conscientious in every detail, he instituted reform measures in his own diocese, establishing the authority of the Church, but making clear that such authority exists only for the glory of God. He was vitally opposed to ecclesiastics in secular employment; he supported with zeal the cause of the mendicant orders; he fought against the curse of appropriations which led to the impoverishing of local Churches; he influenced his parochial priests to return to the preaching of the simple gospel, based upon the message of the Scriptures. In all of these he showed that he was a friend of Church reform, and especially so in his appeal to God's Word, which was to him the only infallible guiding star. (2)

(3) DUNS SCOTUS (1265 ? - 1308), the famous "Doctor Subtilis", did much to mold the philosophical realism of Wyclif. (3)

- (1) De Veritate Scripturae, II, 137
- (2) "Hac sola ad portum salutis dirigitur Petri navicula"-Epistolae 115, 336. This "hac sola" is a harbinger of the Reformation principle "verbo solo". Cf. Lechler, 40.
- (3) It is extremely difficult to "pigeon-hole" the subtle philosophy of Scotus, and various authorities differ as to his stand on realism and nominalism since the chimerical entities of his philosophy are so hard to grasp. Perhaps some would call him a Nominalist because of the nominalism of his pupil, Ockham. Yet the bulk of substantial evidence makes Duns a Realist. He allows no real distinction between essence and existence, "Simpliciter falsum est quod esse sit aliud ab essentia". (Opus Oxoniense, I, 4, d. 13, q. 1) The following recognized authorities make him a Realist:
 - 1. Ueberweg, History of Philosophy, I, 453-454
 - 2. M. DeWulf, History of Medieval Philosophy, II, 72-76
 - 3. Townsend, Great Schoolmen of Middle Ages, 252

(continued on next page)

Duns was the great opponent of Thomas Aquinas, the former emphasizing freedom, the latter necessity in their ideas of God. Aquinas was speculative; Scotus employed a negative destruction of error, rather than a positive construction of truth. His criticism marks for Scholasticism the beginning of the end, although it was not a pure scepticism. This scholastic has always been held in high esteem by the Jesuits because of his philosophy of the primacy of the will over the intellect, out of which grew the ethical doctrine of the Society of Jesus that the end justifies the means.(1) Surely they cannot fail to honor him also for his championing of the great Roman doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

Scotus influenced Wyclif by his critical, dissolvent spirit, although it was not the Reformer's policy to adhere with blind obedience to the things he criticized, as was the case with Scotus.(2) With Duns Wyclif also held the belief in the omnipotence of the arbitrary will of God, and although both men professed to believe in the freedom of man's will, in reality they fettered it with their emphasis upon God's will so that they practically denied what they asserted. Both men moved perilously near to a philosophical pantheism, which was the common danger of the realistic schools of that day, as well as of this.(3)

It is quite probable that from Scotus Wyclif derived

(continued from preceding page)

4. Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 233
5. Taylor, H.O., The Medieval Mind, II, 511-514
6. Rashdall, Universities of Europe, etc., II, 531-535
7. Capes, The Eng. Church in the 14th and 15th Cent., 310
8. Mellone, Western Christian Thought in Middle Ages, 247f.
9. Rogers, A Student's History of Philosophy, 220
10. Workman, John Wyclif, I, 104-109; 110-111
11. Lechler, John Wycliffe, etc., Appendix III, 473-474
12. Pennington, John Wiclif, etc., 53

(1) Workman, I, 110

(2) Townsend, Great Schoolmen of the Middle Ages, 247, 251; and Workman's valuable discussion, I, 111f.

(3) Lechler, 253f; also Cadman, Three Religious Leaders, 61-2

some of his later thoughts concerning the Eucharist-- for in spite of the fact that Scotus adopted transubstantiation, he allowed the abstract possibility of the presence of Christ together with the bread and wine in the consecrated sacrament, and made a distinction between the natural mode of Christ's presence in heaven, and the sacramental mode of His presence in the Eucharist-- both views being followed generally by Wyclif, though not in detailed agreement with Duns. (1) And it is only natural, since Wyclif opposed Aquinas in many ways, that the Oxford Reformer would turn to Scotus for theological guidance in some of the burning questions of the day, for the "subtle doctor" was the great controversialist against the Thomistic theology.

(4) THOMAS BRADWARDINE (1290 ? - 1349), the celebrated "Doctor Profundus", unquestionably exerted a great influence upon Wyclif in his philosophical and theological thinking. This versatile Churchman's ability is seen in that he was twice chosen Archbishop of Canterbury, 1348 and 1349, accepting the honor the latter time only to be stricken with the plague shortly after his consecration. It is quite probable that Wyclif was a pupil of Bradwardine in the former's earliest years at Oxford, (2) although this point is disputed in spite of the statement of D'Aubigne. From this celebrated professor, whether directly or indirectly, Wyclif learned an anti-Pelagian determinism, which put the divine will as the antecedent necessity of every effect. Although Wyclif did not fully accept the predestinarianism of Bradwardine, (3) we are convinced that the doctrine of grace which the latter held had a notable effect

(1) Stone, History of the Doctrine of Holy Euch. I, 340

(2) D'Aubigne, History of the Reformation, V, 110

(3) Yet a favorite saying of Wyclif's is "Omnia quae evenient, de necessitate evenient".

upon Wyclif, who at times seems to wander between the indeterminism of Fitzralph and the determinism of Bradwardine.

In his conception of grace Bradwardine had a further influence upon Wyclif, especially in the molding of the Reformer's doctrine of sin. From Bradwardine Wyclif had learned the idea that there is nothing evil "per se", although in his thorough-going determinism the Archbishop had come dangerously near making God the author of sin. (1) But Wyclif could not hold the thought that God Himself occasions the evil volition in the soul of man, for that would be to excuse our sins altogether (2)-- and it is here that he parts company with Bradwardian philosophy, taking, as we have already seen, the Augustinian view of sin as a negation.

Bradwardine influenced Wyclif in at least two ways:

(a) He caused the Reformer to continue to emphasize the position of Augustine in regard to grace, the Archbishop holding that it was impossible for man to acquire merit before God in any sense whatsoever. (3) The fuller statement of this precious doctrine was reserved for the reformers of later years, yet, as Rashdall points out, at this particular time a return to Augustine, begun by Bradwardine, was a step toward a return to spiritual Christianity. (4) (b) Bradwardine also led Wyclif to a greater belief in the Holy Scriptures as the only infallible guide of the Church. Perhaps no servant of the Church was a greater exponent of the Church's authority than was Bradwardine, his position being Hildebrandian, indeed-- but this authority must be derived

(1) De Causa Dei Contra Pelagium, II, Cap. 30

(2) De Dominio Divino, I, Cap. 15, fol. 141, col. 2

(3) De Causa Dei Contra Pelagium, I, Cap. 38, 319

(4) Rashdall, Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, II, 540

from God's Word. (1) And if it be true that Wyclif was at one time a student of Bradwardine, then we can conclude that the evangelical position of the great master, discoursing day by day at Oxford on the sovereignty of grace, and the freeness of salvation, ultimately had its effect on the young mind of the embryonic Reformer, and was a factor in turning Wyclif to a diviner Page than that of Plato or Aristotle; for this young mind was instructed in a theology that was not a man-made system, but in one the essence of which was drawn directly from the Bible.

It is only natural that other men wrought their influence upon Wyclif, such as Thomas Aquinas (2), William of Ockham (3), Richard Fitzralph (4), Marsiglio of Padua (5), Berengar of Tours (6), William of Perault (7), and probably Dante (8). But considered as really influential personalities, those whom we have mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs seem to have contributed the most to Wyclif's stream of thought and spiritual reservoir. Thus we see that the Reformer's realism was molded by Scotus and Bradwardine; his doctrine of grace by Augustine and Bradwardine; his conception of sin and the fall of man by Augustine; his solicitude for souls (9) and the desire to proclaim the evangelical truth by Grosseteste; his reliance

- (1) De Causa Dei Contra Pelagium, III, 808 (his prayer)
- (2) Cf. Workman, John Wyclif, I, 104-107
- (3) Cf. Lechler, 40-48; and Vattier's "Wyclif", 287-292
- (4) Cf. Lechler, 54-64; Rashdall, Universities of Middle Ages, II, 541, who exaggerates the influence of Fitzralph. Yet from him Wyclif borrowed the idea that "dominion is founded in grace".
- (5) Cf. Workman, I, 132-134
- (6) Cf. Vattier's (op.cit.), 278-280
- (7) Cf. Workman, I, 342; and Loserth's "Johann von Wiclif und Guilelmus Peraldus", Vienna, 1916
- (8) Schaff's "John Huss", 9-10; also Workman, II, 318 (note)
- (9) Cf. Appendix D for Chaucer's description of a "poure parsoun" whom some believe to have been a description of Wyclif.



upon the omnipotent will of God by Scotus and Bradwardine; his appeal to the authority of the Scriptures by at least three, Augustine, Grosseteste and Bradwardine (probably Ockham and Fitzralph should be included); and his anti-Pelagian predestinarianism perhaps by all of the four whom we have especially mentioned. Yet Wyclif's system of thought, influenced as it was by others, was really made his own. We do not agree with Dr. Workman's statement that "Wyclif as a Schoolman does little more than gyrate on a well-beaten path, oftentimes concealing his track with clouds of dust".(1) The re-statements, if such they were, of great reforming principles came to Wyclif as discoveries for his age (2), and the Reformer succeeded in fusing these great principles into one system. In Wyclif there met a multitude of converging lines from the centuries preceding him; and from him there must radiate manifold influences, which in a sense converge in later years in the great Reformation. (3)

In conclusion, we may notice that all of Wyclif's thinking up to the time of 1379-1380 had some support from the greatest writers and thinkers the Church had produced. His aberrations from orthodoxy up to this period in life-- and also later-- were not insusceptible of some defence on traditional lines; and regardless of how bitterly his statements were opposed and condemned, they all had been held to some degree by a section of the orthodox leaders and thinkers of the Church. He

- (1) Workman, *Christian Thought to the Reformation*, 241; and his "John Wyclif", I, 143; See Vaughan's good discussion of Wyclif's originality in his "Life and Opinions", etc., II, 363-365 (1828 edition)
- (2) Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, 173
- (3) Gasquet, *Eve of the Reformation*, 209-211, denies Wyclif's influence on the Reformation, claiming Gairdner in support. However, nearly all historians assert Wyclif's influence on the Reformation, if not directly, certainly indirectly through Hus.

had substantial support from the Church Fathers and from many of the great Schoolmen for his liberal teachings. But it is in the closing years of his life that he does more than "gyrate on a well-beaten path", and it is in these later years that he gave full proof of his independence as a thinker, showing that maturity of mind and spirit which was ready to do more than "bark against the Church" (1). In these later years, as we shall endeavor to point out in the succeeding pages, he proved his readiness to go farther than his predecessors had gone in liberal thought, all the while manifesting a courage like that of a pioneer as he challenged the unwarranted doctrines and practices of the Church; and with his protesting spirit, made all the more powerful by his keen, accredited, academic thoughts, he called upon the State to reform an unwilling clergy, and to purge the Church of all existing corruption-- and especially that corruption which choked and clogged the divinest avenues of grace, namely the sacraments.

(1) Cf. *Chronicon Angliae*, pp. 115-117

CHAPTER III

THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL

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A frank and open study of the sacraments of the Christian Church, whether more or less exhaustive in nature, will prove enlightening to any student of history who focuses his attention on a particular period; but for the true Protestant two eras will always have their fascination and appeal,--namely, the early patristic period when the light of the Master gleamed brightly in His newly founded Church, and doctrines were crystallized into some of the first creeds of Christendom; and, secondly, the period of reform in the Middle Ages, when men sought to cast aside the ecclesiastical incrustations of the centuries in order to return to a simpler, less formal and more spiritual life as they interpreted it from the New Testament message of Jesus and His earliest followers. It is to the second of these periods-- the Middle Ages-- that we now turn, hoping to grasp something of the wonder and mystery of that early day when a new light of revelation and learning broke through the canopies of ecclesiasticism, and the Dark Ages were no more.

Much has indeed been written concerning John Wyclif as the "Morning Star of the Reformation"-- a term which is not strictly true since he had his forerunners, who, as we have already indicated, helped to mold his views and opinions. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that we owe a great debt of gratitude to this Reformer for our present liberties, and for our intellectual freedom; and the writer would here pause in gratitude to give humble witness to the deepening convictions in matters of faith which have resulted from this research into the life and doctrines of John Wyclif.

One cannot understand the following chapters to the fullest extent unless something is known of the scholastic theology and thought in which Wyclif daily moved. We realize that it is a distant journey to travel from the pure simplicity of the early Christian doctrine in the primitive Church to that highly elaborate, highly technical, hair-splitting theology in which the Schoolmen revelled in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; but this is a journey that must be taken if we are to appreciate the sacramentarian controversies in which Wyclif later became engaged. But before we embark upon this "journey", we pause for a word of warning that the journey is a hazardous one. The subject with which we deal is a highly technical one, and extremely difficult-- indeed so difficult that absolute accuracy in all minor details is hardly to be expected within the scope of this thesis. However, we shall proceed cautiously, hoping to remain true to the subtle, mystical, and sometimes chimerical doctrines of the learned Schoolmen.

The theology of Augustine (354-430) had held the center of the stage during the early history of the Church, and even in Wyclif's day the Schoolmen professed allegiance to this great Bishop of Hippo. But many began to diverge from his teachings, especially from those doctrines which because of their severity repelled them-- e.g. his absolute predestinarianism, and the view of man's total depravity. In contrast to this extreme Augustinianism, which left all to God for man's salvation, the Church came to hold, or continued to hold Semi-Pelagianism, and finally developed the scholastic doctrine of merits. This was good insofar as it sought to vindicate human freedom, but it worked an irreparable wrong in that it sponsored a view of salvation by man's works, which found its support in the

ecclesiastical tendencies of the age-- one of which was to work righteousness. Religious devotion became a thing of penitential and ascetic deeds. We can see that the theological tables were now turned; for it is a far cry from salvation by God's grace to the view of salvation by man's merit through works, where justification actually must be earned rather than accepted. In great volumes of words the Schoolmen defended Augustinianism, but in reality it was cast aside. (1)

We are able to discern in the particular century which focuses our attention a revival of the pure Augustinianism, this counter reaction being brought about largely by Aegidius Romanus, an Augustinian monk, Thomas Bradwardine, and John Wyclif in the fourteenth century.(2) These men, through a return to the Scriptures and through sincere criticism of the ecclesiastical practices of their day, launched their teachings against the corruptions in the Church ruled from Rome. Wyclif, in whom we are especially interested, fought valiantly against three specific principles of his age-- namely, papal absolutism, the right to dispose of heretics by death,(inquisition), and the sacramental Church as the only medium of dispensing salvation.(3) The importance of these principles warrants a brief discussion of each, although we realize that they are not altogether mutually exclusive. We shall consider them in the order named, with the fullest treatment being accorded to the last, which is the most important for our purpose.

The Church had failed to win a victory for herself abroad in the great struggles of the Crusades (1096-1270 or later)

(1) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 310

(2) Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation, I, 76

(3) Philip Schaff, John Huss, 4-9

but she had proved victorious at home in establishing the medieval belief of papal absolutism. The Pope in the Crusades gave the call to arms, supplied means for the struggle from the treasuries of the Church, showered upon the warriors the blessings and indulgences of the papal throne-- and in the end held them subject to his wish by the irrevocable crusader's vow which all had taken. By this method the Pope, as Peter's successor, became vested not only with the power of the whole Church -- "plenitudo potestatis"-- thereby becoming a spiritual dictator, but he became also a dictator in the realm of the State. The democratic ideals of the New Testament were forgotten under this extremely autocratic system. The power of the two swords was claimed, the temporal as well as the spiritual.(1) Kings and princes were made vassals-- John of England, Frederick Barbarossa, and Frederick II were among the greatest who were humbled-- and even beyond this it was asserted that for the salvation of every person it was necessary that each be subject to papal sovereignty. It is interesting to note that all this papal absolutism was founded neither upon good Biblical warrant or example, nor upon the best principles of logical reasoning-- yet the Schoolmen buttressed the claims of the Popes by their intricate theological arguments, fitting their thinking to suit a prevailing system rather than condemning the system by their logical thought.(2) However, this warping of a philosophical and theological system to fit the prevailing customs and practices of the Church was something which Wyclif would not do-- and in this pioneer spirit of non-conformity to the Church we see a true leader who dared to condemn the absolute sovereignty of the Roman pontiff.

(1) Pope Boniface VIII's bull, "Unam sanctam", 1302 A.D.

(2) Especially Duns Scotus (1265?-1308) and Thomas Aquinas (? -1274), the latter so much so that he was designated "Doctor Angelicus".

Again, the theory of the Church as the visible institution which alone could grant salvation through the sacraments was a logical outgrowth of this papal absolutism; and because of this sacramentarian position which the Church held, a self-perpetuating organization arose which quite naturally became merciless toward dissenters-- and the inquisition of heretics was ushered in. Heresy, in the minds of the hierarchy, was not simply an intellectual opinion, but a depravity and a crime. All those who differed from the Church's views in her dogmatic teachings and in her discipline had no rights within the Church; and consequently no rights on earth-- not even the right to live. Aquinas expresses his view, in full accord with the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, when he says of heretics: "They are not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also excluded from the world by death". (1) The individual once banned by the Church, was not only banned by society as a whole, but even executed by civil tribunals through codes of laws enacted under ecclesiastical pressure. (2) In such an age the Church easily fostered fear instead of love, superstition instead of faith, subjection instead of freedom, and intellectual darkness instead of light. Against such error Wyclif rebelled, teaching that neither sinful man nor the Church has the right to judge heretics. It belongs only to God. (3)

It is not difficult to understand that such a prevailing ecclesiasticism would lead eventually to a sacerdotalism of great power. The idea of the Church almost ceased to be that of the community of the faithful, the mystic body of Christ, and

(1) Quoted from Schaff- John Huss (op.cit.), 9

(2) Codes of Frederick II; also of Louis IX of France.

(3) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, III, 297-299

came to be a conception which was almost entirely hierarchic and sacerdotal. The Church alone could dispense the sacraments which were essential to salvation, and these could be administered only by one who was properly recognized by the hierarchy as a priest qualified so to act. The Church distinctly taught that beyond her fold there could be no salvation or remission of sin (1), and that beyond her fold there could be no true sacraments so necessary to eternal life, for the Church was the sole dispensing agent of these divine mysteries. Wyclif expressed the current conception of the Church-- not his own view-- when he said, "There is no salvation for believers apart from the reception of these solemn sacraments".(2) We can readily see that such a system undertook a presumptuous monopoly on all divine grace.

But it is erroneous to suppose that this conception of the Church was held by all, for these high claims were not entirely lacking in opponents. The temporal rulers occasionally sought to challenge papal absolutism, proving that they still clung to a view of the freedom of the temporal powers from ecclesiastical domination-- though often this challenge proved to their sorrow. Men like Marsiglio of Padua (1290?-1342), John of Jandun (c.1270-c.1327), and William of Ockham (1280-1349) championed the imperial claims as set over against the papal, and in so doing they endeavored to restore and revive the democratic conception of the Church as the body of Christ. The humanists under the impulse of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio helped to take minds out of the ecclesiastical rut, and turn them to a

(1) Even Wyclif says "Extra sanctam ecclesiam catholicam non est salus vel remissio peccatorum." *De Ecclesia*, 11 Augustine's words are practically the same in "De Catechizandis Rudibus"-(Marriott ed., Oxford, 1876), 69

(2) *Dialogus*, IV, Cap. XIV, 294

new culture and learning. Such disciplinary reformers as Konrad of Gelnhausen, Henry of Langenstein, John of Gerson and Peter d'Ailly aided in ushering in more of the spirit of democracy in Church administration.(1) And the German mystics, such as Meister Eckart, John Tauler, Henry of Suso and John of Ruysbroek (2), through preaching and writing helped to restore to the Church an emphasis upon the spiritual, rather than upon ritualism, or a deadening sacramentarianism. They possessed by their simple faith a certain "wisdom the weary Schoolmen never knew". (3)

With these introductory remarks we come to a general consideration of the medieval sacraments, which must demand in this work something of a detailed treatment.(4) We must note with particular care that the doctrine of the sacraments was not fully developed in the Church until the Middle Ages, and then largely by the Schoolmen. As the early Church Fathers developed the great Trinitarian and Christological doctrines, so did the medieval Schoolmen formulate the sacramentarian views, which were later accepted by the Councils as the defined dogma of the Church. Prominent among these many great theologians whose conclusions determined the subsequent position of the Latin Church are Hugo of St. Victor (c.1097-1141), Peter the Lombard (?1105-?1160), Alexander of Hales (?-1245), and the renowned Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). They went back to the teachings of Augustine

(1) Schaff's "John Huss" (op. cit.), 14-15

(2) Moeller's Church History, Vol. Middle Ages, 468-472

(3) John Greenleaf Whittier

(4) For what follows I acknowledge the guidance of many valuable sources, chief among which are: Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, III, 453-501; Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 200-275; New Schaff-Herzog Encycl. X, 141-146; Hastings Encycl. Rel. and Ethics, X, 897-915; Encycl. Biblica, III, 3249-3252; Catholic Encycl. XIII, 295-305; Mackinnon, Luther and Reformation (Scholastic Doctrine of Church and Sacraments), I, 79-89.

and accepted his definition that a sacrament is the "visible sign of invisible grace"(1)-- yet little realized that in the end they departed far from him with their doctrine of "ex opere operato", a concept which made the sacraments more magical, and therefore more objectionable to the reformers. They still clung to the Augustinian concept of a "communicated likeness of the divine nature", but accepted the Thomistic view of grace which led to a magical interpretation of the sacraments. (2)

Historically, the word "sacrament" comes to us from the Latin "sacramentum", which is the Vulgate rendering of the New Testament Greek word *μυστήριον* (mystery) in Eph.1:9;3:3,9; 5:32; I Tim.3:16; Rev.1:20. In early times this word "sacramentum" denoted (a) a pledge or security made by parties of a lawsuit, and (b) an oath of allegiance to the emperor taken yearly by the Roman soldiers. Neither of these meanings gives us an entirely satisfactory explanation for the rendering of the Greek word *μυστήριον* as such, but the early concept was doubtless among Christians that the "sacramentum" was a renewed oath of allegiance to their spiritual "imperator", namely Christ. It is known that the term was used in the time of Tertullian (3) to apply to rites in the Christian Church, although this is the earliest testimony on record in this connection. Little is known of its true origin, although James Stalker says, "It is possible that St. Thomas Aquinas, in his etymological guess (4) relating 'sacramentum' to 'sacrare' exactly as 'ornamentum' to 'ornare', lighted upon the true development of the word".(5) Augustine's

(1) De Cathizandis Rudibus, xxvi, 50

(2) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 201

(3) De Praescriptione Hereticorum, 20; Adv. Marcionem, 3

(4) Aquinas, In IV Sent. I, i, 5

(5) Encycl. of Rel. and Ethics, art. "Sacraments", X, 904

great statement "Sacramenta Novi Testamenti dant salutem; sacramenta Veteris Testamenti promiserunt Salvatorem"(1) is a truthful play on words, but fails to help us in the interpretation of the word of his day, for the learned Bishop of Hippo meant by it the whole content of revelation.

With characteristic exactness the Schoolmen distinguish in the sacraments between the thing and the thing signified-- the "signum" and the "res". Wyclif was no exception in this regard.(2) The "signum" is visible, perceived by the senses; the "res" is invisible-- however, the two do not always appear so distinct, for in the scholastic terminology they may be conjoined in a figurative passage-- e.g. when Paul says, "That rock was Christ". But ordinarily the sacrament or sign might be distinguished from the thing signified. In reality, a three-fold distinction was drawn, which was not always capable of clear illustration: (a) the sacrament and the thing, (b) the thing and not the sacrament, and (c) the sacrament and not the thing. Perhaps the thoughts of the Schoolmen in this connection can best be illustrated by the Eucharist, where the body of the Lord which is above is called the sacrament and the thing-- being a sacrament because it is a sensible sign of the soul, and of the grace of Christ, and since it is signified by the host it is also the thing; again, it is a sacrament and not a thing (though quite obviously a thing to the senses) because it is not the holy thing signified, for it cannot naturally be the body of Christ; and again, it is a thing and not the sacrament in its reference to the union of Christ with His Church. (3)

(1) In Ps. 73 (quoted from Hastings Encycl., X, 905)

(2) See his careful analysis at the beginning of *De Eucharistia*; Sermones, IV, 353, etc.

(3) *Triologus*, IV, Cap. II, 248

For the Schoolmen the sacraments not only are channels whereby God's grace may come to His followers, but they also "contain and confer grace", having a virtue inherent in themselves; they effect what they represent. This was an attempt to intellectualize a religious experience, and led to the mystical and magical "ex opere operato" view; (1) and here may be seen a definite trend away from Augustine, the separation being permanent since the magical view eventually was accepted and defined as dogma by the Council of Trent. (2) A figure often employed to describe the operation of the sacraments was that given by Hugo of St. Victor (3), which pictured God as a physician, man as the sick patient, the priest as the nurse or the one administering the remedy, grace as the medicine to work the cure, and the sacrament as the vessel containing the medicine. From this point of view it was only a short step indeed to the Schoolmen's position that the sacraments of the Church not only signify, but sanctify. Grace cannot operate in the human soul without them, they said. A slightly more cautious view was held by Peter the Lombard, which claimed that the sacraments not so much contain grace, but they effect it causally. (4)

The combination of philosophy and theology is seen in the application of the Aristotelian categories of "form" (forma) and "matter" (materia) to the sacraments of the Church, and many interesting distinctions arise-- often just cases of pure dialectic reasoning-- to make this conception fit each individual case. (5) William of Auxerre is credited with this

(1) This expression was used by William of Auxerre and Alexander of Hales, and adopted by subsequent Schoolmen.

(2) Sess. vii, De Sacr. in Gen. 8

(3) De Sacramentis, I, ix, 4.

(4) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 205

(5) Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, III, 455 f.

innovation, although its true origin is not known. It at least was in common vogue shortly after his time, and was eventually defined in general terms by the Council of Trent (*materia et forma quibus sacramenti essentia perficitur*). (1) For the most part the form consisted in the words or ritualistic statements used by the administering person-- hence formula. This must usually be followed with extreme care, especially in the case of baptism. A slight defect of form might invalidate the sacrament altogether-- a fact which shows the movement toward a conventional ritualism with its emphasis upon the external, rather than a true emphasis upon the spiritual condition of the heart. The matter relates to the elements of which the sacrament is composed-- e.g. in baptism, the water; in confirmation, the anointing oil; in the Eucharist, the bread and wine. Any defect of matter might also militate against the efficacy of the sacrament.

Although the Schoolmen were as one in that the sacraments conveyed grace "*ex opere operato*", they were not unanimous as to the conditions under which the effect is produced, the effect being interpreted as the sanctification of the soul, with the end as eternal life. But some insisted that the disposition of the recipient would affect the true efficacy of the sacrament. Those who maintained that the condition of heart, or disposition of the individual recipient could in no way render inoperative the grace of the sacrament, held the purely "*ex opere operato*" view; while those who held that the intent or disposition of the recipient might affect the operation of the

(1) Sess. xiv, 2. The bull of Eugenius IV had already said, "*Haec omnia sacramenta tribus perficiuntur, vid. rebus tamquam materia, verbis tamquam forma, et persona ministri conferentis sacramentum cum intencione faciendi quod facit ecclesia*". See Harnack, *History of Dogma*, VI, 213.

inherent grace, were in part at least denying the "ex opere operato" theory. Something of a middle position was taken by such men as Lombard and Aquinas when they clung to the theory that grace may work "ex opere operato", but a meritorious disposition on the part of the recipient may contribute something to the sacramental efficacy, which they termed "ex opere operante".

Quite naturally this positive view was confronted by another view-- held by Scotus and the Nominalists-- which asserted that a positive disposition of merit was not necessary, but only the absence of a negative or evil disposition, such as unbelief, contempt or blasphemy. (1) One of the ingenious conclusions of the scholastic reasoning grows out of this proposition, for by it they simply make black white! In penance, for example, they reasoned that a person did not have to have "contritio" (true sorrow for sins), but only a more neutral, colorless something called "attritio" (the fear of hell), in order that sins might be forgiven in the sacrament. Instead of possessing a truly penitent heart, he might possess simply the fear of the consequences of his sin and guilt. The magical grace of the sacrament, however, would "ex opere operato" change the attrition into the more meritorious contrition, and then the individual would receive something which he did not truly possess! What more is this than a "downright swindle", "scholastic humbug", as Professor Mackinnon puts it (2), turning a low moral motive into a high one, and making meritorious that which really is not meritorious! If it does not make evil good, it at least makes that which is not good good; for the

(1) Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, III, 476f, especially 481-482.

(2) Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation, I, 83.

neutral condition, simply by its freedom from evil, or fear of what evil might bring, might become meritorious.

A few words need to be said concerning whether the true efficacy of the sacraments is dependent upon the character of the one administering them. The Schoolmen were quite agreed that the personal character of the administering priest did not affect the efficacy of the sacraments, for an unworthy priest in the sacraments can confer grace if he administers them according to the prescribed regulations of the Church. As good water can flow through a leaden pipe as well as through a silver one, so grace, they said, can be conveyed through sacraments of an unworthy priest. But the priest, in order to act in the name of the Church, must intend to perform the sacrament. This intention must always be present on the part of the administrator, and generally on the part of those who are the recipients, although for the latter the intention may be of varying kinds. However, if the intent be negative, the sacrament is not received-- such as eating consecrated wafers to satisfy the pangs of hunger. But the intention can never be absent from the priest -- for if so, the sacrament is immediately invalid. The Church of Rome in the Middle Ages-- as it does to-day-- retained this convenient loop-hole of intention whereby it wriggled out of many a serious sacramental difficulty; for where a reliance could not be made upon the "defect of form" and the "defect of matter", there was usually a resort to the "defect of intention" to provide a way of escape from an embarrassing theological entanglement.

But in John Wyclif we see one who, though he accepted much of the usual "ex opere operato" view of the sacraments early in life, eventually came to a position of doubt

as to the efficacy of any sacrament administered by an unworthy priest. The following quotations will indicate that at one period in his thinking he conformed to the general view of the Schoolmen that the efficacy of the sacraments is not in any way dependent upon the worthiness of the priest who administers them, providing he does so in keeping with the standard rites of the Church:

"Cum debemus credere quod omnia sacramenta sensibilia, rite ministrata habent efficaciam salutarem." (1)

"Videtur autem mihi quod prescitus, eciam in mortali peccato actuali ministrat fidelibus, licet sibi dampnabiliter, tamen subiectis utiliter sacramenta." (2)

"Thes Anticristis sophistis schulden knowe wel, that a cursed man doth fully the sacramentis, though it be to his dampnyng, for thei ben not autoris of thes sacramentis, but God kepith that dygnyte to hymself." (3)

Certain human inventions in the Church-- e.g. the election of the Pope-- have not the promise of God that grace will be given, but for the sacraments God has covenanted to give grace. And he names baptism and repentance (penance), perhaps only by way of example. (4) One might easily conclude that this grace must be inherent in the sacraments regardless of the character of the administrator the recipient. (5) But as we shall endeavor to prove, this is not Wyclif's true position in the matter, especially for his maturer years.

It is admitted that Professor Lechler sets forth a very convincing argument in support of the view that Wyclif at no time considered the saving efficacy of the sacraments to

- (1) De Ecclesia, Cap. XIX, 459.
- (2) De Ecclesia, Cap. XIX, 448
- (3) De Precationibus Sacris, S. E. W., III, 227
- (4) De Civili Dominio, I, Cap. XLIII, 371
- (5) De Civili Dominio, II, 94

be conditioned by the worthiness of the dispensing priest.(1) He admits, however, that during Wyclif's lifetime one charge was brought against him at the Earthquake Council (article No.4) that he held the heresy that a bishop or priest, standing guilty of mortal sin, has no power to ordain, or consecrate, or baptize -- and presumably other sacramental limitations would follow these, though not expressed. Yet Lechler would try to explain this away. It is true that Wyclif's name is not specifically mentioned in this connection, but the whole tenor of the Council's condemnations was aimed at the so-called heresies of this Oxford reformer. As Workman has correctly observed, speaking of the twenty-four conclusions of the Council:

"The majority of these Conclusions may be deemed to be a fair presentation of Wyclif's thought." (2)

And Wyclif's old enemy, Thomas of Walden, whom historians reckon as a reliable witness, makes mention of the fact that Wyclif doubted whether Christ would support and recognize the sacraments of a priest whose daily walk was contrary to the practice and precepts of the Master.(3) All of these points seem to concur in supporting the view that Wyclif did entertain some doubts as to sacramental efficacy being conditioned by the worthiness of the priest.

Yet the matter, as Lechler admits,(4) can only be settled definitely by the words of the Reformer himself, which words the German professor could not find. However, since the publication of this professor's excellent biography of Wyclif, the Wyclif Society has published many of the Reformer's writings and public utterances (sermons, etc.)-- and here in our humble

(1) Lechler's "John Wycliffe", 336-339

(2) Workman, I, 267

(3) Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Cath. Eccles.III, 11 f.

(4) Lechler, "John Wycliffe", 337

opinion ~~an~~ answer to the problem may be found.

The fact that he entertained grave doubts in this matter is seen by his admission that great difficulty arises when the question is seriously and honestly faced; (1) and by the time he wrote the Latin treatise "De Eucharistia" he could say that the worthiness of the priest did affect in some way the efficacy of the sacraments:

".... ergo efficacius est sacramentum
huiusmodi in sacerdote bono quam malo." (2)

He also indicates that a priest who does not follow the Savior in his living has no power of forgiveness, and has none of the keys of the Church:

"Si autem quicumque sacerdos, eciam Romanus pontifex, non sit Christi vicarius, sequendo ipsum in moribus et habendo noticiam solvendi contritum conformiter voluntati divine, tunc non habet potestatem sic solvendi nec alias claves ecclesie." (3)

"..... and proude prestis & coveytous
ben suspect of prestis staat." (4)

And he openly hints that prelates failing to follow Christ may fail also in the ministration of the sacraments. (5) And hardly a more definite position could be taken by the Reformer than that which he asserts, late in life, in a sermon on Titus 3:4, when he says openly that God suspends prelates who are in mortal sin, and their ministry is divinely prohibited:

"Sed cum Deus non approbat sed vetat ut aliquis peccet mortaliter, patet quod omne talis prelati ministerium a Domino prohibetur et per consequens ipse a Deo suspenditur; nec est ponderandum, et si non suspenditur de iure humano, quia credere debemus quod de iure divino et a Sacerdote ac Domino qui non potest falli vel a proposito suspensionis sue decipi de facto suspenditur." (6)

- (1) Sermones, I, 310
- (2) De Eucharistia, Cap. IV, 113
- (3) Sermones, I, Sermo LI, 341
- (4) De Papa, Matt. Eng. Works., 479
- (5) Opus Evangelium, III, 175
- (6) Sermones, III, Sermo VI, 45-46; cf. also
De Ver. Sac. Scrip., III, 308-309

The context of the argument which follows is that there must ensue doubt as to whether such priests can duly administer the sacraments, for sinful, simoniacal, "caesarean" prelates ought not to be accepted in the Church militant. We can, of course, couple this argument with the fact that Wyclif's immediate followers, the Lollards, firmly held that worthiness on the part of the dispensing priest was absolutely necessary for grace to be conferred in the sacraments. Where had they learned this position if not from their master, Wyclif? Surely such a conclusion is warranted in the light of the actual statements which have been indicated.

The position may, however, be further buttressed by circumstantial evidence, for is not this reforming view entirely consistent with his philosophical tenet that dominion is founded upon grace? Surely no one can honestly doubt that Wyclif maintained the principle that dominion comes to those who are worthy -- worthy in the sense that they possess God's grace, which manifests itself in virtuous living. And if dominion is founded upon worthiness, how can a priest have dominion in the realm of the spiritual which the sacraments signify and convey, unless he himself be a worthy person? In his *Trialogus*, speaking in connection with one of the sacraments, the Eucharist, Wyclif indicates that only as Christ works along with a man can the sacrament be brought to effect:

"Sic ergo quandocunque Christus operatur cum homine, et solum tunc conficit sacramentum, quod reputari debet de nostris sacerdotibus et supponi." (1)

And the very fact that he closes such a significant statement

(1) *Trialogus*, IV, X, 280-281

with the suggestion that this ought always to be remembered by the priests, appears to be a clever hint that they are to live worthy lives so that their ministry of the sacraments might be efficacious. Obviously such a conclusion is not foreign to the statement itself, or to the context; and it is in keeping with his beliefs that dominion is founded upon grace, and that the true Church is the body of the elect. When one logically carries this principle of dominion from the realm of the "civil" to the realm of the "divine", it amounts in the end to character being the test of spiritual function. And that without that worthiness of character there is no spiritual function, seems to be the conclusion of his maturer years -- a conclusion which is consistent with the message of the gospel to which he was so loyal -- "By their fruits ye shall know them."

In many ways Protestants who find in Wyclif the true beginnings of reform, wish that he had worked out this theory more fully in his writings -- but at least we can say with confidence that the seed kernel of the idea that character is the true test of spiritual function is to be found in his works, and in his philosophical and theological system of thought. (1) And when we read such a statement as this:

"We shulde understonde that whoso lifs better,
he preyes more profitably to iche Cristen mon. And
thus Seynt Poule biddes men preye withouten lettynge.
And so that prest that lyves better synges better
masse." (2)

(1) Workman, II, 13-14

(2) De Blasphemia Contra Fratres, Pars III;
Select English Works, III, 425

-- whether the words are Wyclif's or a disciple's (1) -- we may know that they are but a re-voicing of the position which the great reformer himself held in the closing years of his life. Dr. Workman is correct in his passing reference to this problem when he says, speaking of the efficacy of the sacraments:

"... in later years he maintained that the value depended on the character of the priest and the nature of his prayers, in a word on the priest 'being consecrated of God.'" (2)

Even Wyclif's pacifism is in accord with this view which we have mentioned. Vitally opposed to war, he held that the clergy must have no part in armed conflicts, for to engage in such struggles disqualifies them for the office of the ministry, and they should therefore be removed. (3) This is in reality but another way of saying that the efficacy of the ministry of a priest (the sacraments would naturally be included) depends upon his worthiness of character and his standing in grace. (4) But the real efficacy comes not from the priest, worthy though he may be, but from God. (5)

A word here needs to be said concerning another question, namely, whether the efficacy of the sacraments is dependent upon the worthiness of the recipient-- though to the scholastic mind this was an insignificant consideration. The condition of greatest importance in the eyes of the Church was that the sacraments were efficacious when rightly administered ("rite ministrata"). But more and more there was the tendency to consider the condition of the mind and state of the receiver

(1) Arnold lists this work as certainly genuine-- S.E.W., III, xvii; cf. also De Civili Dominio, II, 260-261

(2) Workman, II, 41, based on De Euch. 113-114; De Ecclesia, 448, 456-7; and S.E.W., III, 426-- yet III, 227 is the opposite.

(3) Sermones, III, 101-103; cf. Workman, II, 303

(4) Trial. IV, 329 (5) De Potestate Pape, Cap. I, 14

as of increasing importance. Any who held doubt concerning the "ex opere operato" view of the sacraments must logically throw the condition of efficacy either upon the worthiness of the priest or upon the worthiness of the recipient; and since the Church maintained that the worthiness of the administrator did not affect the efficacy, then emphasis was naturally thrown, for these doubting few, to the consideration of the recipient's condition. The conditions first formulated by Scotus that the recipient shall put no barrier in the way of the sacrament-- a condition of "attritio" instead of "contritio"-- was not satisfactory to Wyclif. He demanded more than a merely neutral, colorless attitude on the part of the receiver-- and spoke of "capaces", or communicants to whom the sacrament is of benefit, (1) implying at least that there are others to whom the sacrament is of no benefit, though administered in exactly the same way and by the same priest. This is a definite swing from the traditional, ecclesiastical view to the Protestant view of a positive receptivity on the part of the person to whom the sacrament is administered. Certainly this Oxford Reformer is here touching on a vital theme, which prescribes a truly penitent and pious frame of mind and heart as a condition of blessing which the recipient should enjoy. It is a logical development of his great position in emphasizing character as the test of spiritual function-- not on the part of the administrator now, but on the part of the recipient. Here is where a later Protestantism placed its emphasis, but only after John Wyclif had taken his definitely anti-Roman, anti-ecclesiastical stand which helped to pave the way to an open revolt against the Church.(2)

(1) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, Cap. XII.

(2) A fuller discussion of this problem of the condition of the recipient is given in the chapter on Penance, especially "attritio" and "contritio".

From this we turn to a consideration of the number of sacraments in the medieval Church, a subject which is of vital importance to us, since it must largely determine the scope of the chapters to follow. It is clear that antiquity had handed down nothing to the medieval Church as to the certainty of the number of the sacraments, so we need not be surprised to see great vacillation prevailing for centuries as to the proper number to be recognized. Only on one point was there a semblance of unanimity, and that concerned the two chief sacraments, namely, baptism and the Eucharist. (1) One might admit ever so many sacraments, yet these two always stand out pre-eminent, partly because of their antiquity as Church rites, and especially because of their direct connection with the life and ministry of the Savior. Since the number of the sacraments is of necessity linked closely with the nature of a sacrament, we find that the Schoolmen went back to Augustine's definition that it is a "visible sign of invisible grace", and also to his words, "Cum ad res divinas pertinent, sacramenta appellantur". But many things visible may pertain to divine things, so great confusion followed on the strength of the great bishop of Hippo's authority. Bernard chose ten of the many ecclesiastical rites as sacraments; Abelard and Hugo of St. Victor (2) chose five, calling them the "sacramenta majora", (or spiritualis), and those who came afterward never chose fewer in number; Lombard chose seven (3), which number was generally accepted by Aquinas and the thirteenth century theologians (4), and was finally defined as the true number by the Council of Florence, 1439, and named thus: baptism, confirmation,

(1) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 201. Baptism from antiquity included the chrisma, or anointing.

(2) Hugo in a broad sense names no fewer than thirty! De Sacr. Christ. Fidei; cf. Encycl. Rel. & Ethics, X, 905.

(3) Sent. IV, d. ii, n. 1; Catholic Encyclopedia, XIII, 300.

(4) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 201-204

Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders and marriage.(1)
 This was reiterated by the Council of Sens (Paris, 1528) and finally adopted by the Council of Trent, 1547.(2) However, the Tridentine definition admits that the seven are not of equal importance.(3)

Although the doctrine concerning the sacraments was not clearly defined in Wyclif's day, the general view prevailed that baptism, confirmation and orders impart an indelible character to the soul, and may not be repeated-- and with this view Wyclif at first agreed.(4) The other sacraments may be repeated, although marriage cannot be until the death of one of the contracting parties; and extreme unction had its opposing schools of thought as to the question of repetition. All of these seven are assumed by the Schoolmen to have been instituted by Christ, either directly or indirectly through the authority of His apostles.

Theologians had long reckoned with the sacred number seven in many phases of the Church's life, but to apply it to the number of the sacraments was really an arbitrary, though ingenious decision.(5) Aquinas taught that by baptism we are spiritually regenerated; by confirmation we increase in divine grace, and faith is renewed; by the Eucharist we receive

- (1) Following the order in Pope Eugene IV's bull, "Exultate deo".
- (2) Trent, Sess. vii, can. 1
- (3) A good discussion of the number of the sacraments may be found in Seeberg, *Dogmengeschichte*, III, 268-276, "Begriff des Sakramentes, die sieben Sakramente"; also in Puller's "Anointing of the Sick", etc., Chap. VII on "Septenary Number of the Sacraments", 241-285.
- (4) He said, "In tribus tamen sacramentis specialiter character imprimitur, scilicet baptismo, confirmatione et ordine"... *De Ecclesia*, XXI, 508
- (5) Cf. Harnack's conclusion, *History of Dogma*, VI, 202

divine nourishment for renewed strength; by penance when sorrow for sin is present we recover spiritual health; by extreme unction evil is banished from both soul and body as life departs; by orders the Church is governed and spiritually multiplied; and by marriage the corporate estate is increased. (1) The number seven was justified for the sacraments not upon Scriptural grounds so much as upon the basis of the well-being of the race, individually and socially considered; (2) and often upon a strained comparison of each sacrament with one of the seven cardinal virtues, and relating to the seven diseases of man. (3) Individually considered, man must be born (baptism), must grow (confirmation), must be nourished (Eucharist), must be healed of sicknesses (penance), must be relieved of burdens in death (extreme unction); and socially considered, man is increased spiritually through orders, and bodily in marriage. Dr. Harnack reasons that:

"The inclusion particularly of orders on the one hand, and of marriage on the other, was a master-stroke of a perhaps unconscious policy." (4)

In turning to Wyclif's own position concerning the actual number of the sacraments, we find varying opinions expressed throughout his works, so that it is difficult to determine what he really believed in this connection. Thomas James, however, in trying to fit Wyclif's position with that of the Church of England in his day, makes the mistake of believing that the Reformer accepted only two sacraments -- admitting

- (1) Summa, Pars III, Q. 65, art. 1
- (2) Ibid., III, Q. 65, art. 1; cf. also Summa contra Gentiles, iv, 58 - where he develops an analogy of sacraments with Nature.
- (3) Bonaventura, Breviloquium, cent. iii, sec. 47, c.3.
- (4) History of Dogma, VI, 204 (note)

that he named seven, but concluding that his "posteriores cogitationes sunt sapientiores".(1) Unquestionably baptism and the Lord's Supper held a supreme sacramental position in Wyclif's thinking -- so much so that his enemies recognized that the Reformer's conception of the sacraments so little accorded with the sentiments of the Church of Rome, that they accused him of maintaining that there were only these two.(2) But such a stand, had he taken it, could not then be called heresy, for some of the most orthodox differed as to the correct number, since this item had not yet been defined by the Church. The differences which arose, however, were over a strict or a liberal interpretation, and the number was in nearly all cases either seven, or more, instead of fewer than seven.

The Reformer quite correctly reasons that the true number of the sacraments must be determined by what a sacrament is; that their number in the life of the Church must follow, not precede, the question of their nature and quality. The "What?" must precede the "How many?" and "Of what quality?"(3):

"Sed oportet eos primos dicere, quod nesciunt distinccionem huius sacramenti ab aliis, et per consequens nec numerum sacramentorum, nec aliquam passionem; nam questio "quid est" presupponitur ad duas alias questiones." (4)

It may be seen that Wyclif, like all the Schoolmen, accepted Augustine's definition of a sacrament -- "sign of a sacred thing", or "visible form of invisible grace" -- and we find him entering upon a discussion of the meaning of a sacrament at the beginning of the fourth book of his Trialogus. But

(1) James, An Apologie for John Wickliffe, etc., 31

(2) Art. 45-48 Damn. Oxon. et in Syn. Const.

(3) Although Dr. Harnack reasons to the contrary-- see History of Dogma, VI, 201

(4) De Apostasia, Cap. IV, 58

in characteristic scholastic language and style the Reformer reasons that the generic idea of a "sign" is too wide, for all of creation is but a sign of God's handiwork, and certainly all things created are not sacraments except in an extremely loose sense. Here Wyclif comes dangerously near to a materialistic pantheism, which is seen also in other passages.(1) The concept of a sign must be narrowed, so he thought, so he says that a sacrament is a "sign of a holy thing" (*sacrae rei signum*)(2)-- and even this concept is too broad and vague, for creation is the sign of a holy God, for it is His handiwork. Therefore the concept, he feels, must be further limited. Still narrowing the definition he mentions with more precision that a sacrament is "the visible form of an invisible grace", bearing a resemblance to it, and becoming a cause of this grace ("*invisibilis gratiae visibilis forma, ut similitudinem gerat et causa existat*").(3) But metaphysically he can conceive of this definition as including all of creation, the Creator revealing Himself in nature, and each thing bearing something of His likeness; also causing God's grace to be known to some extent through natural revelation. He here, apparently, feels that definition is futile, and abandons the attempt in despair. But in one of his English works, the famous "Wicket", we have a definition which, unsatisfactory though it is, helps to shed a little more light on what Wyclif considered a sacrament to be.

"Therefore alle the sacramentes that be lefte here in earth be but myndes of the body of Chryste, for a sacrament is no more to saye, but a sygne or mynde of a thyng passed or a thyng to come." (4)

And again in another passage he says:

(1) Trialogus, IV, I, 244

(2) Ibid., IV, I, 244

(3) Ibid., IV, I, 244

(4) Wicket (Cambridge edition, 1851), section 13.

"A tokyn that may be seen of a thing
that may not be seen with any bodili eye." (1)

He held that the sacraments of the new law are more efficacious
than those of the old, and are signs of final grace.(2)

Since the Reformer held both an inclusive and a limited
view as to the number of the sacraments, we must in all
fairness present his thinking from both sides. As to the liberal
and more inclusive view of the sacraments, he felt that
the customary seven was far too few for the recognized sacraments.
He says in this connection, speaking through Alithia in
the Trialogus:

"Quomodo ergo sunt solum septa sacramenta
distincta specific?.... Mille autem sunt
talia sensibilia signa in scriptura, quae habent
communiter ista septem." (3)

"Nec didici pictatias ex quibus adjectis
hoc nomen sacramentum limitari debet univoce ad
haec septem." (4)

He does, however, take occasion to name and give the order of
these "seven vulgar sacraments" ("septem sacramentorum vulgarium")
which were commonly accepted; and he gives them thus:
"...haec septem sacramenta, scilicet baptismus, confirmatio,
ordo, matrimonium, poenitentia, eucharistia, et extrema unctio".
(5) Lechler reads into his statement here a touch of irony, for
Wyclif states that the weak foundation upon which some of these
rest must be due to his own inability to comprehend and understand
the foundation of such sacraments sufficiently. (6)

We can see how liberally the Reformer interpreted the
term sacrament when he says:

(1) Codd. Ric. James in Bibl. Bodl.-quoted from
Lewis, 165

(2) De Ver. Sac. Scrip. III, 153

(3) Trialogus IV, I, 244-245

(4) Ibid., IV, I, 245-246

(5) Ibid., IV, I, 246

(6) Lechler, John Wycliffe, 334 (Trialogus IV, I, 246)

"Sacramentis ben open & knowen ...
iche good sensible dede that we don, or that
springith of mannes charite, may be callid a
sacrament." (1)

But to get away from this vague generality he speaks more specifically that seven sacraments in the Church are not enough to satisfy him, for he would include by all means the seven works of spiritual mercy as sacraments -- namely, teaching, counsel, reproof, consolation, forgiveness, patience, and prayer.(2)

"Sacramenta autem alia necessaria praetermisit, ut patet de septem operibus spiritualis misericordiae, quae debent apud fideles et specialiter presbyteros esse sacramentum." (3)

Also preaching ought to be called a sacrament, since it is a definite means of grace, and far more important than some of the sacramental rites of the Church. We startle with surprise to learn that this medieval priest and Oxford don held preaching to be the most perfect work -- more precious than the administration of any sacrament,(4) even than that of the Eucharist.(5) By the evangelical method of preaching Christ accomplished more than by all the miracles which He wrought.(6) Its importance is seen when he says that no one can be saved apart from the hearing of Christ's message.(7) Preaching is the chief duty of all prelates (8), and it must never be degraded by being carried out for the purpose of gain.(9)

(1) Of Confession-(also called Nota de Confessione) in Matt. Eng. Works, 341

(2) Ye Seven Werkys of Mercy Gostly, S. E. W., III, 177. Cf. also Sermones, I, Sermo XXXVII, 246-252

(3) Trialogus IV, XXV, 334-335

(4) De Ver. Sac. Scrip. II, 156; Opus Evangelium II, 375

(5) Sermones I, Sermo XVI, 110

(6) De Ver. Sac. Scrip. I, 316; II, 179, 239; Pot. Pape, 209

(7) Sermones I, Sermo LIX, 386

(8) Sermones IV, 271, 403; Sermones I, 248-249

(9) Opus Evangelium, II, 347; Sermones II, 57-59

Wyclif would also include some of the miracles of Christ as sacraments; he mentions in particular the three instances of Christ's raising the dead as three sacraments, for they were the means of turning men to God.(1)

As to his narrower, more limited view, we find that he mentions the seven sacraments in a great many places, especially in his Trialogus, but he seems to narrow the conception to a much smaller number in others. Too many of the recognized sacraments of the day were but priestly inventions to him -- man-made and not God-made -- as he indicates in a sermon in the vernacular:

"But housis of preestis weren worldely arayed, and thei kepten as sacramentis many of her fynding, and bi thes the fend thought that he shulde overcome hem." (2)

He is also convinced that on the basis of Scriptural authority seven is far too many sacraments for the Christian Church, for Christ and His disciples did not use so many:

"Also than schulde prestis studie holy writt & be devout in here preieris, & not be taried with news offices, as newe songis & moo sacramentis than Crist usede & his apostles, that taughten us alle treuthe & spedly savyng of cristene peple."(3)

And in the Trialogus he complains that the sacraments have become multiplied so as to be a burden instead of a blessing to the Church.(4) We frankly would have been glad if Wyclif had been more definite in this matter, naming which ones he considered as those having true scriptural warrant. Instead, however, he goes only so far as to hint in a negative way that extreme unction and confirmation did not have sufficient ground

(1) Of Confession -- Matt. Eng. Works, 341

(2) Sermon XLII, S. E. W., I, 119

(3) Whi Pore Prestis Han None Benefice-Matt. Eng. Eorks, 253

(4) Trialogus, IV, XI, XIV, XXV

in Scripture to be necessary for salvation.(1)

There are passages to be found where a definite unity of the sacraments is expressed, making all of them one. The probable source of such an idea may have been his philosophical pantheistic tendencies, or more probably Chrysostom, whose writings he knew. In one place he definitely links the idea with this golden-tongued Church Father:

"Omnes tamen illi ordines sunt unus ordo, et sic sunt tantum septem sacramenta, licet sit tantum unum sacramentum, sicut Chrysostomus, Omelia prima, dicit de septem ecclesiis." (2)

Fortunately this idea of the unified sacraments was never developed in any of his writings.

However, his main conclusion is that there are seven sacraments -- perhaps from a desire to be orthodox! -- for in speaking of the Eucharist he mentions "the other six sacraments" -- even speaking of their modical entity and permanence:

"Similiter discurrendo per alia sex sacramenta, patet quod illa sunt ita modicae entitatis ac permanentiae sicut istud. Nec fingi potest ratio, quin per idem quo illa sunt sacramenta ecclesiae, est et istud, ut patet discurrendo per quidditatem baptismi, confirmationis et quattuor ceterorum narratorum." (3)

We come now to the question of the necessity of the sacraments. To the medieval scholastics they were not all equally necessary. Aquinas makes a two-fold distinction of necessity of end, a simple necessity without which the end cannot be attained (as food is necessary for life), and a necessity without which the end cannot be conveniently or becomingly attained -- as a horse is necessary for a journey.(4)

- (1) Trialogus, IV, XXV, 333f; IV, XIV, 294
- (2) De Ecclesia, XXI, 513
- (3) Trialogus IV, II, 247; IV, XI, 281
- (4) Summa, Pars III, Q. 65, art. 4

Generically considered, the sacraments as a whole are necessary for salvation; but specifically speaking, baptism alone is essential for the saving of the soul. The other six sacraments were held in varying degrees of importance under the rule "non defectus sed contempus damnat", with certain ones partly necessary for particular circumstances, -e.g. marriage, unction, etc. Hugo of St. Victor declared that God might have saved man without the sacraments, but now that they have been divinely instituted, no man can be saved except through them. In short this expresses the prevailing medieval belief as to their necessity.

But Wyclif did not conform to the prevailing belief of his day as to the necessity of the seven sacraments of the Church. Like his contemporaries, he held some of the sacraments in much higher esteem than others. Baptism and the Eucharist are to him the "summa sacramenta". Baptism is the most necessary of all the sacraments ("baptismus quod est sacramentum necessariissimum"), (1) and in the same place he shows that the others are not so necessary ("alia minus necessaria sacramenta"). He also points out that if extreme unction really accomplished all the Church claims for it, it would be the most necessary sacrament. (2) It may seem somewhat inconsistent, yet in another place he admits that the most important sacrament is the Eucharist, giving it first place in these words:

"Eucharistia, quae est penultimum sacramentum, tum quia est magis venerabile inter cetera, tum secundo quia videre habere fundationem maximam in scriptura." (3)

Yet strangely enough these words are set aside in a still later chapter of the same work, when he takes the curious interpreta-

- (1) De Ecclesia, XIX, 455
- (2) Trialogus, IV, XXV, 334
- (3) Trialogus, IV, II, 247

tion that the Incarnation is the greatest of all the sacraments:

"Christus enim in propria persona est signum sensible, et ut videtur mihi sacramentum sacramentorum, cum sibi summe conveniat descriptio sacramenti." (1)

Even though we cannot readily determine which was the greatest sacrament in his thinking - (it probably was the Eucharist) -(2)- we still feel fairly certain that baptism remained the most necessary, since necessity and greatness are not synonymous, though perhaps not mutually exclusive. But he nowhere speaks of baptism, in the sense of the external Church rite, as being essential to salvation. We believe, as we shall set forth later,(3) that Wyclif in his mature years was not a believer in the doctrine of baptismal regeneration -- and if this "most necessary" sacrament were not absolutely necessary, then surely there is no strict necessity for the "less necessary" sacraments. It appears, with his emphasis upon the inner spiritual life, rather than upon the external rites of the Church, that Wyclif did not accept the seven sacraments as being essential to salvation. A belief in a sacramental means of salvation is to him a very great error:

"Sed grave est quod ecclesia oneretur tam multiplici ceremonia, gravius quod tantam vim ponat in illa, et gravissimum quod nemo potest salvari a Deo, ut dicunt, nisi credat et accipiat secundum formam iam currentem huiusmodi sacramenta." (4)

Faith can possibly be preserved without the sacraments at all (5), which is a drastic conclusion for any medieval priest to have made. And it is all the more drastic, apparently, when we

- (1) Trialogus, IV, XI, 283; see also discussion by Böhlinger, 329
- (2) De Eucharistia, 3, 87
- (3) Cf. Chapter on Baptism
- (4) De Potestate Pape, Cap. XI, 277-278
- (5) De Ecclesia, XIX, 457

recall that it was made as early as 1378, before those later years of such intense revolt against the practices of the Roman Church. However, we must not fail to keep in mind that he retained his high regard for at least some of the sacraments (1), counting them as a means of grace whereby the soul is nourished and strengthened, and saying that they should not be neglected.(2) In no wise did he go as far as his immediate followers, for they openly denied the necessity of any sacraments, as is seen in the statement of Lollard opinions given by Sir Louis de Clifford before the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1402:

"That the seven sacraments are only dead signs, and are of no value in the way in which the Church uses them."(3)

But to Wyclif there was another road to salvation -- a godly life. To pursue formulas was but to forget the essence of Christianity.

"The direct relation of the individual to God without these interventions, was the positive result of his (Wyclif's) negative criticism."(4)

Wyclif expressed disgust as to the many unnecessary rites and ceremonies which had been brought into the Church through the seven sacraments. One can easily infer that he longed for the day when the Church, "the ship of Peter"(5), would be free from the many accumulated barnacles, so that she might the more readily make spiritual progress:

(1) De Off. Regis, 49

(2) De Ecclesia, Cap. XIX, 459

(3) Walsingham, Historia Anglicana, II, 252 (Rolls Series, 28b)

(4) Trevelyan, "Age of Wyclif", 175-176

(5) De Civili Dominio, I, 392

"Et sic in sacramento baptismatis,
in sacramento confirmationis et cunctis aliis
antichristus ritus infundabiles adinvenit, et
ad onus ecclesiae extra fidem scripturae supra
fideles subditos cumulavit." (1)

Additional ceremonies may prove to be an aid to piety and worship; they are good in so far as they help others to love Christ more, but the Church would be better off without them.(2) And his true Protestantism rises to an unexpected height when we observe that his position accords with the great doctrine of justification by faith of a later age. Men have measured Wyclif by the standards of the sixteenth century reformers, and have criticized him (3) with severity, claiming that he had not grasped the concept of a righteousness by faith alone; yet a close examination of his works reveals that he had begun to grasp the profound truth of this great reformation doctrine, although it is not fully developed in his works. He seems to have grasped the fact rather than the dogma; yet we can hardly agree with Le Bas when he says:

"The doctrine of justification by
faith was in truth the vital principle of
Wycliffe's theology." etc. (4)

But an open expression of this truth is voiced when Wyclif says that faith is the ground of justification before God:

"Probat apostolus undecimo Hebr.,
quod fides sit fundamentum iustificacionis

(1) Trialogus, IV, XXV, 334

(2) De Apostasia, 250; Forshall & Madden, Wyclif's Bible, Prologue, Cap. II, 3

(3) Cf. Melancthon's criticism, preface to "Sententiae veterum de coena Domini", Corpus Reformatorum, II, 32; cf. Lechler, 287. Yet Vaughan says "It is plain that Melancthon could have known little of Wycliffe's theological productions, when describing him as 'ignorant of the righteousness of faith'...It was not more distinctly apprehended by the Professor of Wittenburg, than by the rector of Lutterworth; nor was this truth the source of a more permanent or delightful confidence with Luther than with

(4) Le Bas, 320 f; cf. Hague, 147 Wycliffe."

hominis quoad deum." (1)

And elsewhere we see a few passages that seem to give further light on his conception of this truth:

"Quod omnes sequentes Christum iustificati ex sua iusticia tamquam sua generacio salvabuntur." (2)

"Ideo docuerunt apostoli, sufficere ad salvacionem cristiani sine ritu superaddito fidem domini Jesu Christi." (3)

"Nemo salvabitur nisi dona Spiritus Sancti habuerit, nemo autem recipit hec dona nisi disposicionem priorem habeat", etc. (4)

And following this last quotation he speaks almost immediately of believing faith ("fidem credendam"). And he urges a simple life of faith when in the Trialogus he condemns the alleged power of the keys in penance by saying:

"Vivamus ergo in fide filii Dei, hoc est in lege scripturae Domini Jesu Christi." (5)

These brief statements gleaned from his writings, though few in number, give us some conception of the Reformer's position in this matter, and his words fall as direct blows against the prevailing view of his day as to the necessity of the Roman sacraments. They are not essential at all, for a true reform in the Church would not cause it to perish for want of the sacraments, since

"Christus est papa, pontifex et prelatus sufficiens sine signis talibus superinductis, quem perfecte fideles debent credere salutare." (6)

We would do a great injustice to the medieval period were we to omit some discussion of the evils of simony in connection with the sacraments. Simony may be generally defined

- (1) De Ver. Sac. Scrip., I, Cap. X, 219
- (2) Ibid., III, Cap. XXX, 211
- (3) Ibid., III, Cap. XXVIII, 132
- (4) Sermones, III, Sermo XXXIX, 323
- (5) Trialogus IV, XXIII, 329
- (6) Sermones, II, Sermo IX, 65

as the deliberate will to buy and sell spiritual privileges and their appurtenances. Wyclif defines it as "the inordinate will to exchange spiritual for temporal things".(1) And since the Church's spiritual life largely flows through the channel of the sacraments, it is not surprising to find the evil desires of men trying to buy and sell these sacraments, so that the spiritual powers (as in the case of Simon Magus) might be obtained by material means. Naturally enough, the Church has fought for centuries against this evil which threatened her spiritual rights, and has always regarded this offence as of the gravest nature. In the Middle Ages this evil was quite wide-spread; ordination was often sold, certain fees were required for baptism, marriage, absolution, etc., while other fees were exacted for certain rites such as burial of the dead, admission to a monastery, consecrations, dedication, etc. So prevalent had the curse become that Aquinas treats of it at some length.(2), and concludes that the proper penalty for it is to be deprived of that which is secured by it, which is in keeping with the action taken at the Council of Chalcedon. Strict ecclesiastical legislation was adopted by many councils and courts against the practice of simony, but in few places was it enforced. Even Chaucer denounced its prevalence in his *Canterbury Tales*!(3)

Living in such an age, Wyclif could hardly ignore in his writings this prevailing evil of simony, which to him was one of the greatest of all heresies(4), and which seriously

- (1) De Simonia, Cap. I, 2
- (2) Summa Theologica, II, ii, Q. c.
- (3) See Appendix D.
- (4) De Ver. Sac. Scrip., III, 301

retarded the spiritual work of Christ's Church. Indeed we find him voicing many attacks against it as a practice (1), and especially so in connection with the sacraments:

"Yit on thes thre maners don many men symonye in sacramentis, as ordris, masse synging, confession, and alle the sevene sacramentis of holy Chirche." (2)

And an idea of its prevalence may be seen from the following:

"Symonye is so gret heresie that all synnes ben countid for nought in comparison therof.... insomuche that ech synful prest may seie masse, and make the sacrament, though he do it to his dampnyng; outaken a prest comynge to this ordre bi symonye. Thanne sith no man cometh to this ordre or benefice withouten symonye, almost man may drede of irregularite, and privityng of benefices, and lesynge of salaries, and of degrading; and that here preiere is cursed, and thei in weie of dampnacion, fro this cursed symonye." (3)

Few Churches were consecrated without the curse of this terrible sin.(4) In horror he speaks of the dreadful evil prevailing at Oxford, and shows how seriously he esteems it:

"Loke now wher Oxunford is in thre horrible synnes.... The iij horrible synne is symonie.... this symonie with portenauncis therof is myche worse and more abomynable than bodily sodomye." (5)

From the lowest order of friars to the hierarchy of cardinals he finds simoniacal servants in the Church, and dares to call them worse than Gehazi, or Simon Magus. (6)

(1) De Simonia (all); Sermones I, 329; II, 428; IV, 41, 502-505; De Blasphemia 74; Of Prelates, in Matt. Eng. Works, 69 etc.

(2) Ye Grete Sentence of Curs Expounded, S. E. W., III, 282.

(3) De Precationibus Sacris, S. E. W., III, 226; also see Sermones, IV, 41, 502-505

(4) From a Lollard tract "On the Twenty-Five Articles" given in S. E. W., III, 488

(5) Forshall and Madden's "Wyclif's Bible", Vol. I, Prologue, p. 51; also De Simonia, 8.

(6) De Potestate Pape, Cap. IX, 196

Wyclif's great emphasis in the field of the Church's service is upon the spiritual rather than the mechanical. Form and outward ritual mean very little to him. The condition of the heart must be sincere; there must be a desire or intent to receive grace from God for both the minister and the recipient. He fought against the magical, superstitious "ex opere operato" views of his day -- and as he condemned dead ritual and sacerdotal power, he consistently condemned simony in the sacraments, all the while laying emphasis upon the spiritual grace which can come only through a true communion with God. And in this anti-sacerdotal view, with its emphasis upon grace, we see a distinct return to the basic principles of Augustinianism, with which the Schoolmen theoretically agreed, but from which they had so hopelessly wandered.(1) It is here that the Reformer makes perhaps his strongest claim to Protestantism, for as Professor Dyson Hague expresses it:

"When we come to Wycliffe's teaching on the Church and the sacraments there is scarcely an Article, from the nineteenth to the thirty-second of the Articles of the Church of England, which was not found substantially in the teachings of Wycliffe."(2)

As we shall endeavor to discuss individually Wyclif's conception of the sacraments of the Church, we shall consider each of the generally accepted sacraments of his day, namely, the seven set forth by Lombard and Aquinas: baptism, Eucharist, confirmation, marriage, penance, orders, and extreme unction. We have already shown that in spite of his various views in the matter, Wyclif did recognize to some extent these seven sacraments of the Church -- he called them "sacramenta vulgaria"(3)-- though he did not by any means accept the Church's views

(1) Cf. Harnack's History of Dogma, VI, 275f.

(2) Hague's John Wycliffe, 149

(3) Trialogus, IV, I, 246

regarding them. The fact that he has an English tract with a Latin title of this name, "Septem Sacramenta Ecclesia"(1), and also that he discusses these same seven individually in his Trialogus (2) is strong proof that he did conform, in part, to the accepted number of his day. We find many references appearing in his Latin and English works to the "seven sacraments", and often in mentioning one he will refer to "the other six". Therefore it seems quite logical for us to treat in the chapters to follow these same seven means of grace. However, we shall not accept Wyclif's order of treatment (3), but for convenience we shall begin with baptism as the first sacrament, and shall proceed with them chronologically as they fit into the individual's life, but leaving the Eucharist, which demanded his fullest attention and bitterest opposition, until the very last. In connection with each sacrament we shall include a brief historical survey, with special attention to its development in the Church, both in practice and in doctrine; and in each case the scholastic doctrine of the particular sacrament under discussion will be succinctly stated. The order of discussion, then, will be: baptism, confirmation, penance, orders, marriage, extreme unction, and the Eucharist. "ADELANTE, SIEMPRE ADELANTE"!

(1) Cf. Shirley's "A Catalogue of the Original Works of John Wyclif", 39. The tract begins "The thrydde thing of the sex to know God Almyghty is the sevyn sacramentys.." I have been unable to locate this, however, in any of the published works of Wyclif, which may indicate a modern tendency to consider this tract spurious.

(2) Trialogus, IV, Chapters II-XXV

(3) His order is the Eucharist, baptism, confirmation, orders, marriage, penance, and extreme unction. (Trialogus 247-335) In "De vii Sacramentis" (if it be Wyclif's) he gives a different order: "baptism, confirmation, penaunce, the sacrid oost of the auter, order, wedlock and anelyng". (Lewis, 213)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

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Baptism, frequently called "the first sacrament", "the door of the Church", "the door of the sacraments", etc.(1), is universally recognized in Christendom, though it is interpreted differently, and the external rite with water is not always observed (e.g. Quakers). It is an ancient religious rite, practiced among the heathen (2), among Jews, and incorporated by Christ as the sign of the washing away of sins and the beginning of the Christian life. The word is derived from the Greek *βάπτω* or *βαπτίζω*, meaning variously to wash, to dip, to immerse -- laving being the essential idea. The word is used both literally and figuratively in the New Testament, which accounts for the wide variety of interpretations in this Church sacrament.

Baptism is defined by the Roman Catechism as the sacrament of regeneration by water in the word (3); and Aquinas calls it "the external ablution of the body, performed with the prescribed form of words." (4) The dominant ideas of the doctrine of baptism are three: forgiveness of sin, regeneration, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism has been associated with penance (5), these two being called respectively the first and second planks after shipwreck (6). Yet baptism is a sacrament of regeneration or rebirth, while penance is a sacrament of

- (1) Other names applied in the early Church to baptism are: "the seal", "the key of the kingdom", "the water of life", "the chariot of God", "the shining robe", "the garment of immortality", "the life-giving bath", "the second nativity", "the illumination", "the happy sacrament in which we are set free from blindness".
- (2) Though Kirsopp Lake concludes otherwise (cf. art. in Hastings, Vol. II, 379 f), though his views on 379 and 381 appear to contradict.
- (3) Cath. Encycl. II, 259. (Ad parochos, De Baptism 2, 2, 5)
- (4) Summa, III, Q. 66, art. 1
- (5) In the decrees of Lateran Council, 1216, the decree relative to baptism is followed immediately by a reference to penance.
- (6) Cf. Chapt. on Penance

resuscitation and revivification. The former through regeneration makes one a part of the body of Christ; the latter helps in communion with Christ. Baptism makes us Christians; penance makes us better Christians. Baptism was also joined with confirmation in early times. (1)

The history of this initiatory rite in the Christian Church is of great interest and importance, although the controversies involved were not as bitter, as lengthy, or as full in polemical discussion as those involving the Eucharist.(2) The earliest record of Christian baptism is of course the New Testament, following which we depend upon the Fathers of the patristic period for any record of the rite. We cannot dismiss the rich and voluminous testimonies of this period, as does Darwell Stone, thinking that they contribute practically nothing (3), for the shepherd of Hermas leads us to believe that the magical view of baptism -- something of an "ex opere operato" interpretation -- was not sufficient.(4) There must accompany it the Christian virtues as well - presumably twelve. We make mention of this to show that the "ex opere operato" view was not the exclusive early view -- not even in baptism, where a magical conception has unquestionably predominated. The main features in the earliest Fathers concerning this sacrament are (a) that it was practiced according to the New Testament commands;(b) the trine name was used (5);(c) immersion in running water was the method, though affusion was legitimate;(d) some

(1) Cf. Chapter on Confirmation

(2) Harnack, VI, 230

(3) Stone, Holy Baptism, 41

(4) Sim. ix, 16, 3 f.-See Kirsopp Lake's article, Hastings' Encycl.of Religion and Ethics,II,384-5

(5) Earliest formula is "in the name of the Lord Jesus", but by Justin Martyr's time the trine formula had become general.

fasting occurred before the rite was administered; and (e) heretical baptism was not questioned until Tertullian.

The writers of the second century, though holding that heretical baptism was invalid, really did not precipitate an acute controversy on the problem. This was left for the third century figures of Cyprian and Pope Stephen. The Pope held that an individual must not be re-baptized, while Cyprian, supported by Firmilian, upheld the growing custom of North Africa that all returning heretics should be re-baptized; which, of course, to Cyprian was not a re-baptism at all. For him there was only one baptism, that of the Christian Church, since only the faithful could baptize. The controversy was continued by the Donatists of the fourth century, but the issue was decided by the Church at the Council of Arles, 314, when the Church decreed that all baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit should not be re-baptized.(1) The heresy of re-baptism had already appeared among the Gnostic sects, where they attempted to solve the problem of post-baptismal sins by re-baptizing the sinner - e.g. the Marcionites, Marcosians, etc.- while others went to the opposite extreme and postponed baptism until immediately before death (2)- sometimes actually baptizing the dead (e.g. the Marcosians).

(1) The 8th canon of this Council reads as follows:

"De Afris quod propria lege sua utuntur ut re-baptizent, placuit ut si ad ecclesiam aliquis de haereticis venerit, interrogant eum symbolum, et si perviderint eum in Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum esse baptizatum, manus ei tantum imponatur ut accipiat Spiritum Sanctum. Quod si interrogatus non responderit hanc trinitatem, baptizetur."

(2) Harnack, History of Dogma, IV, 284

The Donatists, in emphasizing Cyprian's position that the character of the administrator affected the value of the rite, forced the Church to emphasize the objective validity of baptism -- a view that baptism was not dependent upon man, the administrator being only quasi-necessary, and of comparative unimportance. The important essentials are the Holy Trinity and the believer, and when administered, the sacrament "ex opere operato" confers an indelible stamp on the recipient. The emphasis upon the objective is seen further in the tendency to regard conscious faith on the part of the recipient as being unnecessary -- seen in the baptism of the unconscious sick, and of infants. Though Harnack says we "are in complete obscurity as to the Church's adoption of the practice" of infant baptism, it was quite probably a second century development -- if not apostolic --(1) and grew to be the prevailing custom by the fifth century, if not before. Early Councils anathematized heretics who did not recognize the baptism of small children; and the Lateran Council of 1139 condemned all those who rejected "baptisma puerorum".

In spite of the high position accorded to baptism as the door of the Church, the gateway to all the other sacraments, its relative importance began to fade as penance was enhanced. This fact is borne out in the Schoolmen, since they dealt far more with the latter than with the former. No important developments appear in the medieval Church in regard to baptism until the time of the Reformation, which is beyond our period. Apparently the Schoolmen were content to define and defend this

(1) Good discussion in Hastings' Encycl. II, 392-393

initiatory rite against heresy and against misuse.

The Scholastic doctrine (1) concerning baptism is contained in the following paragraphs. It was held to be the first sacrament, was instituted by Christ, and without it all other sacraments were null and void for the recipient. The matter of the baptism was divided into the customary categories of the remote and proximate; the remote matter is natural and true water -- any other liquid not usually designated true water, such as oil, saliva, tears, milk, wine, sweat, fruit juices, etc., is not valid matter, although great variety of opinions here prevailed. (2) The condition of the true water is of no consequence, for it may be from sea, fountain, well, or marsh -- may be salt, fresh, hot, clear, cold, turbid, colored, etc. The proximate matter of the sacrament is the ablution performed with water, with the forms of immersion, infusion, and aspersion all accepted.

The form of the sacrament is derived from the New Testament (Matt. 28), and is Trinitarian, "I baptize thee (or "this person is baptized") in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". The indicative, enunciative form of the Greek Church ("This person is baptized", etc. *Βαπτίζετε*, "baptizatur") was acceptable, but not used in the West. Aquinas asserts the necessity of making clear in the form the meaning of a baptismal ablution -- that an act of baptism must be expressed so that there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the ceremonial rite. (3) Full expression must be given not only to

(1) See Seeberg, Dogmen. III, 273, 462-464

(2) Cf. Hagenbach, II, 331-332; Wyclif's De Blasphemia, 25; Innocent III declared baptism of an infant in extremis to be invalid, when human saliva was used.

(3) Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 66, art. 5

the word "baptize", or its equivalent, but also each person in the Trinity must be mentioned separately. The Schoolmen exploited their intellects over the possible juggling of words and syllables in the accepted formula (1), but the Church's doctrine was that the Trinitarian formula must remain intact. An accidental slip of the tongue might render the efficacy of the sacrament invalid -- at least doubtful.

The necessity of the sacrament is difficult to interpret, for baptism was held to be necessary both as to means and as to precept. Other sacraments were considered according to the rule "non defectus sed contemptus damnat"(2), but baptism was essential. Thus the Church could say:

"No salvation has been promised to infants except by the baptism of Christ-- because if infants do not pass into the number of believers through the sacrament which was divinely instituted for this purpose, they remain in darkness. The Church, therefore, decides that infants dying without the sacrament of baptism will not be saved."(3)

This position confirmed the established one, "Extra ecclesiam non salus est." And what applied to infants was true as well with adults. Baptism was the "sine qua non" of grace. Yet the Church, while holding its absolute and unequivocal position making baptism necessary for salvation, sidestepped its firm stand by admitting substitutes, such as the baptism of blood in martyrdom, and the baptism of desire, a perfect contrition that seeks baptism but is prevented from receiving it. Thus the real position of the Church as to the necessity of this sacrament came to be "aut in voto aut in res" (which is incompatible with its "ex opere operato" interpretation applied to

(1) Cf. Workman, I, 145

(2) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 210

(3) Fasciculus Rerum, 204-205, quoted from Vaughan's Tracts and Treatises of Wycliffe, 161 note.

all sacraments).

The minister of baptism is the regularly ordained priest, except in cases of necessity ("instanti necessitate" or "in extremis"), when a layman might validly administer this sacrament. The Lateran Council of 1216 carefully states that baptism is valid, by whomsoever duly administered, though Innocent III condemned the self-baptism of a dying Jew. The effects of this sacrament were held to be regeneration; the remission of all sins, whether original or actual, both in the sense of "culpa" and "pena"; the infusion of sanctifying grace, with supernatural gifts and virtues (1); and the granting of an indelible character, or seal, which does not allow repetition of the sacrament.

In coming to Wyclif's conception of baptism, we note immediately from an examination of his Latin and English works that there are very few references to this sacrament -- and especially do they seem few when we consider the comparative importance of this sacrament in Wyclif's system of thought. He defines the sacrament briefly:

"Baptismus autem est signum generationis spiritualis hominis in Deo, et sic est primum sacramentum conferens gratiam primam spiritualiter generantem." (2)

Although he has very little to say about it, he classes baptism as one of the two greatest sacraments, for it and the Eucharist constitute the "summa sacramenta", since they have the greatest warrant in Scripture, and were immediately and directly instituted by Christ.(3) This was a common interpre-

- (1) To Aquinas baptism is a "causa instrumentalis" of grace, as are all the sacraments. Summa, III, Q. 60-64; cf. Harnack, Hist. of Dogma, VI, 206-207
- (2) Trialogus IV, I, 246
- (3) Ibid., IV, XI, 281. In De. Pot. Pape, 310, Wyclif says baptism has more Scriptural authority than penance.

tation of baptism and the Eucharist in the Middle Ages, since they were instituted personally and directly by the Redeemer -- a fact prominently put forward by Alexander of Hales (? - 1245). But we must not conclude that Wyclif followed the common interpretation of the Church, though his infrequent reference to baptism might easily lead one to believe that he accepted the usual doctrine of his day, and therefore had no argument to bring to the attention of his readers. A careful examination of his works proves otherwise.

Wyclif held a three-fold baptism; of water, of blood, and of fire. The first, "baptismus fluminis", is discerned by the senses, employs a material element, and is commonly known and in use in the ordinary administration of the sacrament. The second is "baptismus sanguinis" (1), or the washing wherewith the martyrs are cleansed; and the Reformer even applies this to the slain "Innocents" in Matthew 2, who, not having reached the age of eight days, were not circumcised. The third is "baptismus flaminis", which is of the Holy Ghost, unseen, and absolutely essential to salvation. His emphasis upon the spiritual instead of upon the external rite is seen when he says:

"Baptismus autem flaminis est absolute necessarius salvandis." (2)

"Baptismus autem flaminis est baptismus Spiritus Sancti, qui est simpliciter necessarius cuilibet homini, si salvetur." (3)

- (1) Here he shows the influence of Augustine, for Augustine had taught, "When any die for the confession of Christ without having received the laver of regeneration, it avails as much for the remission of their sins as if they had been washed in the sacred font of baptism." De Civ. Dei, XIII, vii.
- (2) Sermones, II, Sermo LX, 449
- (3) Trialogus, IV, XI, 285. A further condemnation of undue importance attached to signs is found in Trialogus, IV, XI, 284; and De Dominio Divino, III, 235

We can readily see from the above that the baptism of the Spirit was the essential part of the sacrament, for baptism is a figure showing how a man's soul should be baptized from sin -- the idea of I Peter 3:21 evidently being in his mind. The other two forms are but external signs ("*signa antecedentia*") compared with this "*baptismus flaminis*", and only "supposed" to be necessary. (1) If the spiritual baptism is lacking, then baptism by water and by blood avail nothing. Wyclif reaches the conclusion that a man may possibly be saved who was baptized only with the Holy Ghost, in some secret manner imperceptible to the physical senses -- and thus the Reformer sets aside the Church's doctrine of "*extra ecclesiam non salus est*". He says, in fact, that it would be presumptuous for him to say that one was saved or damned merely by the external circumstances of his baptism. One wonders why the Reformer didn't think to mention the example of the thief on the Cross! Perhaps some degree of uncertainty is shown here, for he cautiously adds:

"Yet it must not be imagined by believers that the baptism of the Spirit altogether supersedes the baptism of water, but that it is necessary wherever circumstances permit, to become recipients thereof." (2)

We shall speak further of the necessity of the external rite in dealing with Wyclif's view of baptismal regeneration.

The matter of the sacrament to Wyclif is pure water, for he says:

"Aqua autem debet esse prope elementum non sensibiliter commixta." (3)

- (1) Trialogus, IV, XI, 285
- (2) Ibid., IV, XI, 286
- (3) Sermones, I, Sermo IV, 26

It is one of his mystical doctrines that special holy water was not necessary, since Christ's baptism in the Jordan River sanctified the water, and all water used elsewhere in this manner is sanctified through Christ.(1) In this minute way the Reformer begins to tear the gospel of Christ from its localized conception, and to give to it something of its true universality. The same principle leads him eventually, as we shall see, to the great doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers, which is certainly a position removed from that of the localized authority of the corrupt clergy -- for if it be true that all water used in baptism is sanctified through Christ, it must also follow logically that all prayer is sanctified; the same is true of all acts of devotion which are sincere, and of all means of grace administered by whomsoever of the faithful they may be -- and so on. This readily leads to his consideration of the worthiness of the administrator, more of which will be considered later.

The form of the sacrament was of exceedingly great importance to the Reformer -- and here he clung to the accepted ideas of his day. The administering person must say correctly one of the approved statements, as follows: "Ego te baptizo in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti"; or "Baptizo te in nomine domini nostri Jesu Christi"; or after the manner of the Greeks, "Baptizet te Deus".(2) These words must be stated with painstaking accuracy, for if a slip of the tongue would lead one to say "in nomine matris", then the magic spell would be broken, and grace would not be conferred, due to a defect of form.

(1) Sermones I, Sermo IX, 60; cf. also De Blasphemia, 259, where earlier he seems to have held the opposite view.

(2) Sermones I, Sermo IV, 26

The method of baptism did not concern Wyclif to any great degree, provided the correct words of the Trinitarian formula were used. Baptism may be acceptable in the sight of God by immersion, or by pouring. Immersion may be either by submerging the individual three distinct times, or by doing so only once. Custom and usage must decide this method, and the efficacy of the sacrament cannot be dependent upon it. Pouring water on the head from above was an acceptable method to Wyclif-- he was inclined to believe that John the Baptist and the apostles baptized in this way.(1) Therefore, we cannot justly call the Reformer an immersionist, in the narrower sense of the term; immersion was to him a correct method of baptism, but not the only method.

Wyclif insists that baptism must not be repeated -- and here he is in line with the orthodoxy of his day. He holds to the scriptural truth that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism". We must admit, however, that there are some confused passages in his writings that might appear to some as commending re-baptism (2), although upon a closer examination these are found to be scholastic considerations of the ancient unorthodox practice of re-baptizing heretics. He does not approve of re-baptism, as is clearly seen from one of his sermons, though where it is ignorantly done, he cannot call it such a serious sin:

"Sed post baptismum Christi foret
superfluum ac temerarium quemquam rebaptizari,
cum nec evangelium hoc precipit, neq̄ ad baptiz-
acionem flaminis corporalis baptizacio sit abso-
lute necessario requisita. Nec video quod igno-
ranter sed non contemptibiliter iterans corpor-
alem baptismum ex hoc peccat mortaliter, licet

(1) Sermones, I, Sermo IV, 26

(2) E.g. Trialogus, III, XXVI, 219; IV, XIV, 292-293;
Sermones, I, Sermo IV, 25

quadam sollicitudine prius baptizati non debent rebaptizari." (1)

We thus see that his true conclusion in this respect is the orthodox, anti-Cyprian one, which conforms with the formula of the Council of Arles, 314 A.D. Should there be those who have doubts as to whether they have been baptized at all, then they may be baptized by a conditional formula, "Ego baptizo te, si non es prius baptizatus", etc. (2)

Wyclif stood with the Church in regard to the effects of baptism when it was rightly administered (3), with perhaps two exceptions: he did not support the view that it gave complete regeneration, nor did he hold that it destroyed original sin in the "foreknown". These "praesciti" cannot receive rightly this sacrament, he says, for some perpetual defect remains in them, and they are rejected by God.(4) But in connection with the efficacy of the sacrament being dependent upon the worthiness of the administrator he has no small amount to say -- i.e. in comparison to the total amount said concerning baptism. He stood with the Church in saying that baptism confers, along with the sacraments of confirmation and order, an indelible character, and therefore cannot be repeated:

"In tribus tamen sacramentis specialiter character imprimitur, scilicet baptismo, confirmatione et ordine, quia tria sacramenta sunt initerabilia ut officia characterum indelibilia quoad effectum vel fructum." (5)

"Baptismi enim caractere fidelis

- (1) Sermones, I, Sermo IV, 25
- (2) Ibid., I, Sermo IV, 25
- (3) See scholastic doctrine of baptism, earlier part of this chapter.
- (4) De Ecclesia, XIX, 467. From his strong predestinarianism Wyclif divides all men into the categories of "praesciti" and "praedestinati"--a customary division for his day, and one which proved acceptable to the Church. The Church forbade men to declare openly that the "praesciti" were eternally
- (5) De Ecclesia, XXI, 508 damned.

ab infideli distinguitur, ac si ad Christi militiam sit signatus; et character ordinis clericus separatur a laico..." (1)

Yet with this high view of baptism, the Reformer holds that the sacrament can be performed "in articulo necessitatis" by a layman, and laymen are not necessarily limited to cases of urgency. (2) Clergy and laity alike may perform baptism, but infidels are to be excluded from administering it. He specifically states:

"Tam clerici quam laici possunt homines baptizare." (3)

"Credimus tamen, quod quacunqve vetula vel abjecta persona rite lavante hominem cum verbis sacramentalibus, baptismum flaminis Deus complet. Modicum enim valent signa nostra, nisi de quanto illa Deus acceptaverit gratiose." (4)

It is admitted that the Church permitted lay baptism "in articulo necessitatis", yet Wyclif's emphasis upon it, along with a similar emphasis on his belief that laymen could administer other sacraments, shows the Reformer's growing doubts as to the necessity of the sacrament of orders for certain functions, and his growing conviction that the efficacy of the sacraments (in general) is not dependent upon the worthiness of the administrator, nor upon his office in the Church. (5) We must note that Wyclif does not always include the phrase "in articulo necessitatis" when saying that laymen may baptize -- from which we may conclude that the administration of baptism might be normally their right, instead of only in cases of extreme urgency.

(1) Trialogus, IV, XV, 296

(2) Opus Evangelium, III, 173; Trialogus, IV, XI, 282; and IV, XII, 287

(3) Sermones, I, Sermo IV, 25

(4) Trialogus, IV, XII, 287

(5) Wyclif has traces of Donatism, or the emphasis upon the worthiness of the administrator -- as we have seen. (See also chapter on Orders). His chief Protestant contribution, however, is not by way of emphasizing worthiness on the part of the administrator, but upon the part of the recipient.

The problems of infant baptism were seriously considered in Wyclif's day, as in almost every age of Christendom, and the rector of Lutterworth is willing to face these problems fearlessly and frankly. Some are of the erroneous opinion that Wyclif denied the propriety of infant baptism (1), but his own works afford ample proof to the contrary, as we shall endeavor to prove, yet his thinking is not exactly in line with the practice and precepts of the Church. Ordinarily baptism presupposes instruction in the faith, but parents so instructed may present their children, even tiny infants, for this sacred rite. The Reformer approved of the appointment of sponsors in infant baptism. He appears to have had no doubts about infant baptism as such, but his problems arose as to whether unbaptized infants of righteous parents could be saved. We have already seen the steadfast position of the Church in this connection, but this position Wyclif could not make his own. In the Trialogus we have an interesting case discussed, which gives us light on the Reformer's conviction. The case in point is one where godly parents bring a child into the Church for baptism, according to the rule of Christ, and due to the failure of water, or some requisite -- "the whole people retaining their pious intent"(2)-- the child is not baptized, and meanwhile dies by the visitation of the Almighty. Is such a child saved through the compassionate bounty of Christ, or forever lost?(3) In reply to this question arising from this typically scholastic discussion, Wyclif confesses

(1) See Neale's History of the Puritans; also Crosby's History of the Anabaptists.

(2) Trialogus, IV, XI, 283

(3) Ibid., IV, XI, 282-283

ignorance, saying that he cannot speak so much from knowledge as from supposition. He thinks it probable that "Christ might without any such washing, spiritually baptize, and by consequence save infants".(1) This conclusion is in keeping with his statement concerning the slain "Innocents" who perished before any external sacred rites could be performed upon them. We know from subsequent history of the Lollards (2) that they put forth the proposition that "children need not be baptized" for salvation; and we feel that there is justification in our assuming that they were following their great leader in this point.(3)

We have already had a word as to Wyclif's views concerning the necessity of this sacrament, seeing that it was not absolutely necessary for the salvation of infants, as an external rite -- but the baptism of the Spirit is at all times essential. He refers to this sacrament as the most necessary of all those of the Church:

"Baptismum quod est sacramentum
necessariissimum..." etc. (4)

and he speaks in the same place of the others of the Church:

"...alia minus necessaria sacramenta"...etc.

We have hitherto noted that Wyclif considered the baptism of water and of blood as external and antecedent signs, and only "supposed necessary to this third baptism of the spirit"; and if spiritual baptism is lacking, then baptism by water and by blood avail nothing.(5) He showed a due regard for Scripture in mentioning Christ's words to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of

(1) Trialogus, IV, XII, 285

(2) For a good discussion of the origin of the name, see Vaughan, Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe, II, 411-413

(3) See Workman, II, 402 and note.

(4) De Ecclesia, Cap. XIX, 455

(5) Trialogus, IV, XII, 285-286

water and of the Spirit", etc. -- but claimed that Christ here spoke of the water from His side:

".... probabiliter potest dici, quod Christus loquitur de aqua quae fluxit de suo latere, et de baptismo tertio." (1)

".... nemo potest introire in regnum coelorum, nisi baptismate aquae effluxae de latere Christi et baptismate fluminis baptisetur," etc. (2)

When we read these words we can but conclude that the Reformer held a much lighter view of the necessity of this sacrament than that found in the orthodox position of the Church, for he makes the external rite (*baptismus fluminis*) mean nothing (if "*baptismus fluminis*" be lacking) since in his opinion the "water" mentioned in John 3 is that which flowed from Christ's side.

We can take a further view of Wyclif's interpretation as to the necessity of this sacrament by considering whether he believed in the great doctrine of baptismal regeneration. As we enter this field we need at once to make clear two distinct things: first, we must remember that there was a progressive development in the Reformer's views in regard to the sacraments, which fact permits us to weigh carefully only his latest writings and maturer conclusions in this connection in order to understand what his final position was in this doctrine; and second, we need to understand clearly what is meant by baptismal regeneration. The doctrine is quite succinctly stated in the Roman Catechism, where baptism as a sacrament is defined as the "*sacramentum regenerationis per aquam in verbo*". (3) To the

(1) Trialogus, IV, XII, 286

(2) Ibid., IV, XII, 286

(3) Cf. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, III, 611

Church of Rome all the benefits of the redemption of Christ are conveyed to the soul by baptism; there is no other divinely appointed channel for their communication, since without baptism no grace can be received.(1) The doctrine of baptismal regeneration is the belief that an inward saving change, wrought by the Holy Spirit, is effected in the outward act of baptism itself, whereby the individual passes from death unto life; and by this baptismal regeneration he becomes a child of God and an heir to eternal life.(2) Did Wyclif accept such a view? We believe that he did not.

It must be admitted in all fairness that there are some places in his writings where it seems that he accepts this theory which does so much damage to saving faith in Christ. Notice his choice of language when he says:

"Modus autem salvandi fiebat per
lavacrum regeneracionis et renovacionis, quia
per sacramentum baptisi." (3)

Again in the Trialogus there are passages which seem to indicate that he approved of this regeneration by baptism -- and to one who is not familiar with other writings of the Reformer these passages might appear quite final on the subject; for example:

"Reputamus tamen absque dubitatione,
quod infantes rite baptisati flumine sint bapti-
sati tertio baptisate, cum habent gratiam bap-
tismalem." (4)

Surely on these few words alone may rest a strong case for the Reformer's belief in the doctrine of baptismal regeneration,

- (1) Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, III, 599-600
- (2) Ibid., III, 599-600
- (3) Sermones, III, Sermo VI, 41
- (4) Trialogus, IV, XII, 286

especially since he uses the actual term in the phrase "per lavacrum regeneracionis". But elsewhere we shall see that his language is certainly modified.

We have already put forth some proof that Wyclif did not believe that water baptism was necessary for salvation in all cases, yet how distinctly and unmistakably he drives home this truth in one of his sermons when he says:

"Et si obicitur quod propria baptizacio in aqua materiali non absolute requiritur, ego confiteor cum sufficit baptizacio flaminis per meritum et effluxum aque materialis de latere Salvatore." (1)

And if he admits that the external act is not necessary, how can he admit baptismal regeneration into his system of logical thinking? To deny the necessity of the outward form is to deny this ecclesiastical doctrine of Wyclif's day.

Scholars and critics alike agree that Wyclif's "Trialogus"(2) is one of his latest works -- Workman dates it in the autumn of 1382 -- and since it represents his maturer thinking, its lines are often sought as expressing Wyclif's final views on most of the subjects which he had, perhaps, treated more fully elsewhere. It is here in this veritable storehouse of knowledge that we find what seems to be the final answer in this connection -- and that answer is that the Reformer did not believe in baptismal regeneration. We have already seen his doubts that infants slain for Christ, though uncircumcised, were eternally lost; and his conviction that martyrs for the faith, though unbaptized, were saved through the baptism of blood:

"...certum videtur, quod homo martirisatus pro Christo, licet non irroretur noviter aqua baptismatis, est salvandus." (3)

- (1) Sermones, III, Sermo VI, 42; cf. also ibid., I, Sermo 25
- (2) See Appendix "C"
- (3) Trialogus, IV, XII, 286

By this reasoning he sets aside the absolute necessity of a water baptism, and thus denies, by implication at least, a doctrine of baptismal regeneration. But the most convincing passage of all is found in the same chapter:

"Baptismus autem fluminis est baptismus Spiritus Sancti, qui est simpliciter necessarius cuilibet homini, si salvetur. Ideo duo baptismi priores (or "baptismus fluminis" and "baptismus sanguinis") sunt ut signa antecedentia, et ex suppositione necessaria ad istum tertium baptismum fluminis. Ideo absque dubitatione, si iste insensibilis baptismus affuerit, baptisatus a crimine est mundatus, et si ille defuerit, quantumcunque affuerint priores, baptismus non prodest animae ad salutem. Ideo cum iste sit insensibilis et tantum nobis incognitus, videtur mihi imprudens praesumptio, taliter salvationem hominis vel damnationem ex baptismo diffinire." (1)

How can we say that he believed in the doctrine of baptismal regeneration when he makes such sweeping statements against the external rite as it is performed by the Church? One wonders upon reading such words whether the Reformer were not a good forerunner of George Fox; and whether the Oxford don might not find a welcome among some of the Quakers in our present day!

Another sign which points to the Reformer's doubt concerning this accepted doctrine of the Church is his frank confession of ignorance as to whether unbaptized infants are saved. As is so often the case when he is confronted with a difficulty, he falls back upon the omnipotent will of God, and says, referring to these infants without baptism by the Church:

"Et per haec respondo ad objectum tuum tertium concedendo quod Deus, si voluerit, potest damnare infantem talem sine injuria sibi facta, et si voluerit potest ipsum salvare. Nec audeo partem alteram diffinire, nec laboro circa reputationem vel evidentiam in ista materia acquirendam, sed ut

(1) Trialogus, IV, XII, 285-6. (Underlining is mine.)

mutus subitico confitens humiliter meam ignorantiam verbis conditionalibus usitando, quod non claret mihi adhuc, si talis infans a Deo salvabitur vel damnabitur." (1)

Had he held to baptismal regeneration, he would have been clear in his own mind about this problem, and would have contended with the Church that all unbaptized infants dying in infancy are lost. Yet how far from the Church's position does this reasoning of the Reformer take us! The external rite of baptism by material water can be set aside as unnecessary for salvation; it may destroy whatever sin is present in the individual, yet it does not give one a new birth into the Kingdom; it does "ex opere operato" confer, it seems to Wyclif, an indelible character, but this is not a regenerated heart. It may remove sin, but does not give satisfaction for sin. In this we feel that Wyclif is taking the historic position expressed by some of the Church Fathers -- e.g. Cyril of Jerusalem says (2) that the outward rite will not convey the gift of the Spirit if the candidate does not come in faith; and Tertullian remarks (3) that "in the waters we do not receive the Holy Spirit, but having been cleansed in the water under the influence of an angel ('sub angelo'), we are prepared for the Holy Spirit." The Reformer's emphasis upon the subjective in place of the objective keeps him clinging to the evangelical view that the satisfaction is made through Christ, and not through the ceremonies performed by man. We cannot justly attribute to him a magical belief in this doctrine of the Church of baptismal regeneration when the fuller, maturer views of his later life

(1) Trialogus, IV, XII, 287 (Underlining is mine.)

(2) Cyril, Cat. xvii, 35 f.

(3) Tertullian, De Baptisone, 6.

are fairly examined.

But Wyclif did not dispose of baptism altogether in his system of thinking. It was to him a very serious thing -- in spite of some of his conclusions. In connection with the solemn vows that individuals take he hints that baptism, the vow of a new religion, is the most solemn of all vows; it is sufficiently serious to render all vows made to man superfluous, because this vow is made to God.(1) A promise made to Him is above all other promises, and must not be abrogated.

SUMMARY: We have seen that Wyclif considered this sacrament of baptism as one of the two most important and the most necessary of the seven which the Church employed, though he does not accept the position of the Church in regard to it. He agrees with the Church in that it is a sacrament, that it imparts an indelible character and therefore is not to be repeated, that the form and matter as held by the Church are correct, that it completely destroys sin, both original and actual (except in the case of the "foreknown"), and that it may be performed by a layman in cases of urgent necessity. He differs widely from the Church's position in his prevailing doubts as to the doom of unbaptized infants, in his saying that it may be performed by a layman (not limited to cases of urgency), in his saying that the external act of water baptism is not necessary for salvation, and in his denying the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The logic of these views, with many other doctrinal differences, could but lead to an open break with the hierarchy of the powerful ecclesiastical machine of his day. Wyclif saw

(1) De Blasphemia, Cap. I, 11

practices which he could not accept; he meditated upon doctrines which he must in all honesty reject; and he imparted without fear certain precepts which were inevitably to lead to his condemnation by the Church. Yet he dared to go on proclaiming the truth as he knew it from the gospel of Christ, tested by his own reason and faith, to the salvation of many souls -- which evangelical zeal is honored in the title bestowed upon him, "Doctor Evangelicus".

CHAPTER FIVE
THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

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Confirmation in the medieval Church may be defined as the sacramental rite in which strength for the Christian warfare is conveyed to the believer, and which completes the gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed in baptism, by the blessing and consecration of the bishop. It has for its scriptural warrant numerous passages (so it is claimed), the most prominent of which are: Acts 8:12-18; 10:48; 19:1-6; I Cor. 1:14-17; Romans 5:5; II Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13f; 4:30; I John 2:27; 3:24, etc. -- all of which, however, speak only implicitly of such a Christian rite. The historic foundations upon which this sacrament rests are perhaps the poorest of all the seven which we consider in the scope of this work -- a fact which the keen insight of John Wyclif did not fail to recognize.

Those who hold confirmation to be a sacrament divinely instituted must resort to scholastic methods to justify its existence as one of the seven of the Church -- which method appears in the following quotation:

"On some Sacraments particularly essential to Christianity, Baptism and Holy Eucharist for example, Christ explained Himself completely, so that the Church has had from the very beginning full and entire consciousness of these sacramental rites. As to the rest, the Savior laid down their essential principles, leaving to development to show the Apostles and the Church what the Divine Master wished to accomplish.... In other words, Jesus instituted immediately and explicitly Baptism and Holy Eucharist; He instituted immediately but implicitly the five other sacraments." (1)

And Bonaventura, who once rejected confirmation as being instituted by Christ, finally modified his views by saying that Christ

(1) Pourrat, Theology of the Sacraments (Eng. Trans.)
301 F.

instituted all the sacraments, but in different ways ---

" some by hinting at them and initiating them (*insinuando et initiando*), as confirmation and extreme unction." (1)

Historically considered, this sacrament in the early Church was linked with baptism, the two forming a single rite of initiation, and therefore a separate name was not given to it. But the sacrament was eventually to obtain its independent existence simply through the practice of the Western Church, where only the bishop could administer it; (2) and since bishops could not always be present where priests were baptizing, the rite of confirmation was simply deferred to a later date. (3) Jerome tells us that this separation was already common by the end of the fourth century, although by no means universal, for infant confirmation continued until the very eve of the Reformation. Harnack is of the opinion that the separation of the two rites in the West began "shortly before the middle of the third century" (4), yet probably not until the thirteenth century were the two ordinances permanently separated, with the interval of from seven to fourteen years intervening. (5) In this separation, however, it did not entirely lose its close association with baptism, for confirmation must always presuppose baptism. Aquinas has made this plain when he says:

" si aliquis non baptizatus confirmaretur, nihil reciperet." (6)

- (1) Breviloquium, p.vi, c.4 -- cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, IV, 220
- (2) Harnack, Hist. of Dogma, VI, 230; Seeberg, Dogmengeschichte, III, 464; Encycl. of Rel. & Eth., IV, 8
- (3) Aquinas, Summa, Pars III, Q. 72, art. 12
- (4) Harnack, II, 141 n.
- (5) Hastings, Encycl. of Rel. and Ethics, II, 396f on Baptism
- (6) Aquinas, Summa, Pars III, Q. 72, art. 12

Baptism is the door of the Church, and must first be entered before the blessings of divine grace may be received through the other sacraments which the Church dispenses. This close association of the two sacraments continued, being more than one of mere chronological sequence, since there was similar significance in them:

"Baptism is our birth; but the anointing amounts to strength and motion in us".
Cabasilus (1)

"In Baptism he was born again spiritually to live. In Confirmation he is made bold to fight." - Pre-Reformation Homily (2)

The name of this sacrament is interesting, having gone through various forms until the fifth century when it appears that "confirmation" began to be almost universally accepted. Some of the various designations have been *βεβαίωσις* or "confirmatio", a making fast or sure; *τελείωσις* or "consummatio", a perfecting or completing, expressing its relation to baptism. As to its effect, it has been called a sealing sacrament, *σφραγίς*, "sigillum", "signaculum"; and as to the external rite it was known as the imposition of hands, *ἐπίθεσις χειρῶν*, ἡ *χειροθεσία*, "impositio manus"; and it was also known as the anointing sacrament, "unctio", "chrismatio", *χρίσμα*, *μύρον*. The Western Church calls this sacrament "confirmatio", while the Greek Orthodox Church knows it as *τὸ μύρον*.

So widely divergent were the various views and rites of confirmation in the Middle Ages that it is difficult to speak accurately in terms of the form and matter of the sacrament. This variation of views and practices, no doubt, led the Council

(1) Greek Archbishop of Thessalonica, A.D. 1320 --
from MacDonald, A History of Confirmation, 136

(2) Cf. MacDonald, op. cit., 128

of Trent to proceed with extreme caution in defining this sacrament, and the assembled ecclesiastics contented themselves with only a few canons on the subject. Nothing was defined as to its institution by Christ, whether immediate or mediate, generic or specific; nothing was said about the form of the words to be used; the matter was not clearly set forth, although the chrism is mentioned; and carefully guarded language is employed when it is said that the bishop is the "ordinary" minister of the sacrament. (1) All of this vagueness, evasion, and ambiguity is proof in itself that the theologians of the medieval period were not one on the many questions concerning confirmation, and that cautious diplomacy was employed within the courts of the Church in order that her apparent unity might be preserved.

However, in spite of the divergent views, there was something of a general interpretation of this sacrament, though to this day certain features in its administration remain undefined. Pope Eugenius IV issued the bull "Exultate" which culminated the historic development of the sacrament, although it is not accepted in the Church as a dogmatic declaration. Generally, though, we are fairly safe in saying that the matter of the sacrament is the chrism, or pure olive oil (2) and balsam, consecrated only by a bishop, which is used in the "unctio" or anointing. At one time the blessing of the oil might be done by the bishop on any day of the year, but the custom and practice was finally narrowed so that the chrism must be blessed only

(1) Catholic Encyclopedia, IV, 216-217

(2) In the Greek Church sometimes ninety different aromatic substances were added to the olive oil--and it may be used by the priest. Hagenbach, II, 336

during the solemn high mass on Holy Thursday. (1) Only in the rarest of cases may the right to bless the oil be delegated to a priest by the Holy See. After the oil was once blessed by the bishop, great care was exercised to keep it separate from the oil of the sick ("oleum infirmorum") used in extreme unction. Some would include the imposition of hands by the bishop -- a practice which was not always followed -- as a necessary part of the matter of the sacrament; while a third group would include either the anointing or the laying on of hands as the required matter. (2) The form was the words of the bishop, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." (3) -- however, variations occurred often in this formula in the practice of the Church both in the East and in the West.

An interesting fact in connection with the historical development of the sacrament of confirmation is seen in the "alapa", the practice of giving the candidate a blow on the cheek, with the words "Peace be with thee." This in all probability arose from the customs of medieval chivalry, imitating the blow by which knighthood was conferred, and going back as early as the tenth century, to show that those newly confirmed in the faith were made members of a spiritual knighthood, and as good soldiers of Christ must learn to endure hardness. (4)

- (1) In spite of the fact that Aquinas declares that the acts of the council of Pope Martin ruled it lawful at all times to prepare chrism. But Aquinas favors Holy Thursday. Summa, Pars III, Q. 72, art. 12
- (2) Cath. Encycl., IV, 215-216. Council of Florence declared matter to be "chrisma confectum ex oleo" but Trent did not reaffirm this.
- (3) Summa, Pars III, Q. 72, art. 4
- (4) Hagenbach II, 335; Encycl. of Rel. & Ethics, IV, 10

Some would indicate that the blow on the cheek displaced the laying on of hands (1), for they assert that by that method of physical contact the Holy Spirit was imparted to believers -- a claim that can hardly be substantiated. And still others would say that it is done simply to impress upon the mind of the child the solemn fact of his confirmation. Following the "alapa" a prayer is added that the Holy Spirit may dwell in the hearts of the recipients, and the rite ends with the blessing of the bishop. It may also be noted that in the historical development of this sacrament, official sponsors (godfathers and godmothers) came to be considered as necessary, Aquinas asserting that there "is someone required to stand for him who is to be confirmed." (2) The spiritual relationship established between the sponsor and the recipient, including the recipient's parents, is such as to constitute a diriment impediment to marriage.

"Ex confirmatione quoque, seu frontis chrismatione spiritualis cognatio eisdem modis (sc. ut ex baptismo) contrahitur, matrimonium similiter impediens contrahenda, et dirimens post contracta." (3)

The effect of the sacrament is multiple -- it bestows a sanctifying grace, not only for the remission of sins, but also for growth and stability in righteousness and a strength boldly to confess Christ. It invigorates the soul and the septiform gift of the spirit is bestowed -- a "grace that renders well-pleasing." (4) This grace -- an increase over that granted in baptism -- imprints an indelible character, and the sacrament therefore cannot be repeated. It should be given to all

- (1) Council of Florence, 1439, decreed that laying on of hands was unnecessary.
- (2) Summa, Pars III, Q. 72, art. 10
- (3) Boniface VIII (1298) in sexto Decretal. IV, tit. 3, cap. 1 --quoted from Hagenbach, II, 336
- (4) Harnack, Hist. of Dogma, VI, 231; Aquinas, Summa, Pars III, Q. 72, art. 7

since "Man is spiritually advanced by this sacrament to perfect age." (1) The ordinary minister is the bishop, but by special delegation from the pope a simple priest may become the extraordinary minister, but must use chrism blessed by a bishop. Often a new name is conferred in the sacrament, especially if the candidate has a name which is "unbecoming for a Christian".

In coming to Wyclif's conception (2) of this sacrament we see at once that he had little regard for it -- it seems to have been considered as one of the least, if not the least worthy of all the seven Church rites to bear the name of sacrament. He even calls it "pape empta confirmacio" (3). His many doubts of confirmation need not be interpreted as a sign of heresy -- even the orthodox Aquinas held doubts about this sacrament (4) -- for it was the custom of the day to consider it somewhat lightly, it being administered often in a careless and perfunctory manner. We need only go to the life of the great bishop of Lincoln, St. Hugh, in the twelfth century, to find ample proof of this, for it was recorded of him that by his reverence for confirmation he was distinguished from his contemporary bishops by never administering it on horseback!

"Tanta ministerii reverentia pontificales,
Ut nullum confirmet eques." (5)

With such customs prevailing we need not be greatly surprised

- (1) Summa, III, Q. 72, art. 8
- (2) Able discussions in this connection on Wyclif's views appear in Lewald's "Die Theologische Doctrin Johann Wicliffe's, section "Firmelung", 620-622 in Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, Leipzig, 1847; and Böhlinger's "Die Vorreformatoren des 14 und 15 Jahrhunderts"-section "Die Firmelung", 377-380. Zurich, 1856
- (3) Polemical Works, I, 31
- (4) Harnack, Hist. of Dogma, VI, 231-232
- (5) Metrica Vita St. Hugonis - v. 769 (quoted from Bishop Wordsworth's address, Oct. 16, 1884, 29-30)

that Wyclif was not prepossessed in favor of confirmation in the Church of Rome, and there is little wonder that we find him describing this sacrament as "levis et brevis episcoporum confirmatio". (1)

The Oxford Reformer was firmly convinced that confirmation did not find sufficient warrant in Scripture, as he indicates by the words of Alithia:

"Non enim videtur mihi fundatio sufficiens ex illo Act. viii," etc. (2)

And should it be granted that it has sufficient scriptural foundation, which Wyclif does not concede, then it is not carried out in keeping with the passages upon which its claim for existence really rests. Certain things have been omitted in recent times which were practiced in Scripture, such as the laying on of hands (3); for, he reasons, if it were not incongruous for the baptizer to lay hands on the baptized, then it ought not be incongruous for the bishop to lay his hands on the one to be confirmed, for that was the method of Peter and John in Acts viii. (4) And other ceremonies have been introduced which were not scriptural at all, (5) such as the use of chrism, the binding of the head with the linen peplus, the reservation for bishops, etc. In regard to the use of chrism, it seems to Wyclif a very illogical as well as unscriptural procedure to use the oil as they do, for the consecrated oil is often mixed with large quantities of unconsecrated oil. This process, it would seem, would make the oil no longer consecrated matter for

(1) Trialogus, IV, XIV, 294

(2) Ibid., IV, XIV, 292

(3) Ibid., IV, XIV, 293; Sermones, II, 452

(4) Trialogus, IV, XIV, 293

(5) Ibid., IV, XIV, 294; Polemical Works, I, 262

the sacrament, since the lesser part cannot sanctify the greater. (1) And the anointing, together with the binding of the head with the linen cloth, seems to him a dangerous rite quite unsanctioned by Scripture. (2) The fact that these customs were old could not substantiate the custom or the sacrament. An ancient rite means nothing to Wyclif if it has no scriptural claim. The sacrament is not sufficiently warranted due to the custom of the Church, or its claim to antiquity, any more than a claim to the antiquity of the abuses of the prelates can be adduced to justify their faults. (3)

The Reformer's doubts of the value of the matter and form of confirmation are seen in his treatment of this sacrament in the Trialogus, (4) where he refers to the words of the bishop in the Roman rite, "Confirmo te chrismate salutis", and the teaching of the Church that the power of salvation resides in the oil consecrated by the bishop. Wyclif could not believe in the magical "ex opere operato" power of the oil, and the ritual was of little or no value.

Wyclif's belief that the bishop and the presbyter are the same (5) led him to cry out against the practice of the Church in reserving confirmation to bishops alone. If a layman can baptize in cases of necessity, he asks, then why cannot a layman or a priest confirm? His position is seen in the rather sweeping accusation made against him by Courtenay and his cohorts, in the nineteen condemned articles by Wyclif. Thesis

- (1) De Blasphemia, Cap. XVII, 256-260. The same principle, of course, applies to holy water.
- (2) Trialogus, IV, XIV, 293
- (3) Ibid., IV, XV, 295
- (4) Ibid., IV, XIV, 293-294
- (5) See Chapter on Orders

No. 16 claims for every lawfully ordained priest the full power to dispense every sacrament, and naturally confirmation would be included. (1) Wyclif was firmly convinced that confirmation, orders, and consecration of places -- all powers reserved for bishops -- constituted a great evil, the outgrowth of a system introduced by the devil so that a hierarchy might seem necessary. (2) Not one of these accepted practices rests upon a good foundation (3); they are merely directed to magnify the episcopate in the eyes of the people.

"Non tamen video nec quod hoc sacramentum sit specialiter episcopis Caesaribus reservatum.... Unde quibusdam videtur, quod ista levis et brevis episcoporum confirmatio cum adjectis ritibus tantum solemnizata est ideo motione diaboli introducta, ut populus in fide ecclesiae illudatur et episcoporum solemnitas aut necessitas plus credatur." (4)

We may say that further doubt is written eloquently in silence in one of his English sermons, for in speaking of the duties of bishops he makes confirmation conspicuous by its absence! (5) He does not hesitate to say openly that it is downright blasphemy against God to say that a bishop can really give the Holy Spirit in confirmation -- even the apostles dared not assert this. (6)

"In the sacrament of confirmation we schullen understond that thoug the bischop make a cros with holy oyle with his thumbe on a childe forhede, or on a mannes, the childe or the man reseiveth not the giftis of the Holy Goste of the bischope, but of the gifte of God." (7)

- (1) Cf. Lechler, 167
- (2) Trialogus, IV, XIV, 294; Polemical Works, I, 260
- (3) Dialogus, Cap. 35, 83; Opus Evangelium, IV, 305 f; Trialogus, IV, XIV, 294
- (4) Trialogus, IV, XIV, 294; also Dialogus, Cap. 24, 50; Opus Evangelium, III, Cap. XIII, 49
- (5) Sermon LXXIV, S. E. W., I, 288
- (6) Trialogus IV, XIV, 293

It was a common saying in the Church that the baptized had already received the Holy Spirit in virtue of his being duly baptized; and if he had not so received the Spirit, then Wyclif questions the legitimacy of such baptism.(1) Little doubt can remain on this matter of whether the Spirit is conferred when we read:

"Et ulterius videtur mihi quod foret plus religiosum et conformius modo loquendi scripturae, negare quod nostri episcopi dant Spiritum Sanctum vel confirmant ulterius Sancti Spiritus dationem." (2)

"Similiter videtur quod ista confirmatio introducta supra apostolos blasphematur in Deum, quia asserit constanter, quod episcopi dant noviter Spiritum Sanctum vel ejus dationem roborant et confirmant; hoc autem est plus quam dare Spiritum Sanctum. Apostoli vero non audent sic dicere, sed quod oraverunt pro ipsis, ut Deo acciperent Spiritum Sanctum." (3)

How thoroughly consistent these passages are with the Reformer's anti-sacerdotal, anti-hierarchical stand which sought to eliminate not only the Caesarean bishops but also a mediating priesthood, and to bring the individual directly into communion with God!

Similarly, bishops magnify the importance of this sacrament, even holding it to be greater than baptism and the Eucharist:

"Also prelatys holden the halwyng of ... oyle, & crem, more worthi than the halwyng and blissyng of the sacramentis of the auter." (4)

"It seemeth that bischopys holden this more worthi and nedful than Cristis body and the sacrament of baptyng; therefore to magnyfie here

(1) Trialogus, IV, XIV, 293

(2) Ibid., IV, XIV, 294

(3) Ibid., IV, XIV, 293

(4) Of Prelates, Cap. 6-- in Matt. Eng. Works, 69

staat in pride and charyng of Cristene men,
 thei reserven this newe confermyng to hemself,
 and putten more travaile, and more worthi and
 nedful sacramentis on pore prestis. And in this
 thei schewen her vanyte and worldly dignyte." (1)

But with all of this magnifying of the sacrament
 on the part of the ecclesiastics, Wyclif could not be led to
 the point of believing that the sacrament was necessary to
 salvation.

"Non tamen video, quod generaliter sit
 hoc sacramentum de necessitate salutis fidelium,
 nec quod praetendentes se confirmare pueros reg-
 ulariter hos confirmant, nec quod hoc sacramentum
 sit specialiter episcopis Caesariis reservatum." (2)

He could see no reason why the bishops should not celebrate it
 providing the same result ensued which followed the action of
 the apostles, but if they failed in attaining this, then the
 action was worthless.(3) The validity of the sacrament he was
 inclined to doubt when the bishops were hypocritical, for the
 presence of hypocrisy made the sacrament defective.(4) This,
 again, is a return to his mature position that the efficacy of
 the sacraments is in some way dependent upon the character and
 the grace-standing of the one who administers them.(5)

The breadth of mind of Wyclif may be seen in that
 he permitted confirmation to remain in his view of the Church.
 He did not accept it, but merely tolerated it, realizing perhaps
 that it had some good features, for in a practical way it brought
 ■ the bishop into direct contact with the youth of the parish
 churches in a diocese, which was a wholesome result. In theory

- (1) Ye Grete Sentence of Curs Expounded, S. E. W., III,
 285-286. Workman ascribes this to Purvey, II, 41 n.
- (2) Trialogus, IV, XIV, 294
- (3) Ibid., IV, XIV, 294
- (4) Polemical Works, I, 198; Trialogus IV, XIV, 294
- (5) Cf. Chapter on Sacraments in General

he was violently opposed to it -- as Professor Dyson Hague has said of him in connection with confirmation:

"In all these things Wycliffe demonstrated himself to be a Protestant of the Protestants, the first real and definite Protestant before the Reformation." (1)

Yet in actual practice he appears to have been more lenient than some of his conclusions would seem to permit. As it was the Reformer's favorite practice to look back to the origin of the various rites of the Church, he could see no adequate foundation for this sacrament, yet even in the act of condemning Church rites he is ready to recognize occasional merits in them. (2) This is the hall mark of breadth of sympathy, distinguishing a man of sound temper and ability from the fanatic. With his emphasis upon the spiritual, he naturally judged the forms and rites of the Church by their tendency to promote moral and spiritual aims; and where they failed in this, he inevitably opposed the most cherished practices of the Church. Thus he opposed confirmation as unfounded and of little value, but rather than be an iconoclast he tolerated it because of what spiritual value it might prove to a few.

(1) The Life and Work of John Wycliffe, 162

(2) E.g. the practice of confession - See chapter on penance - adoration of saints, etc.; S. E. W. III, 255

CHAPTER SIX

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

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In discussing this sacrament we shall be as brief as the nature of the subject will allow, although its extensive field, its general importance in the Church, and its frequent mention in Wyclif's writings demand that we linger with it for some time. In a cursory treatment of its historical development we shall at the start hope to point out some of the salient features of penance.

Penance etymologically is derived from the Latin "paenitentia", which signifies the idea of a sorrowful, repentant heart, and a certain dissatisfaction with one's self. It is Jerome's translation of the Greek word *μετάνοια*; the identifying of these two words was destined to bring much joy to Luther a century and a half after Wyclif.

The very nature of the Christian religion requires some kind of penance -- an expression of sorrow for guilt -- yet in Christian history uncertainty of doctrine and practice is seen as to the attitude the Church should take toward the faithful who commit post-baptismal sins and then apply for reconciliation. Penance, like confirmation, was closely associated with baptism, but in a different way. Baptism was the door of the Church, the first means of heavenly grace for salvation, while penance was metaphorically the "second plank after shipwreck" ("secunda tabula post naufragium").(1) Since baptism is a single act removing all sins previous to it, in the second century it was thought possible that a single repentance after-

(1) First called by Tertullian, and after him by many theologians. See Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 84, art. 6; Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 243

wards would suffice for the removal of post-baptismal sins; yet to comfort and ease burdened spirits penance began to be employed more frequently as a means of reconciliation, until it came to be recognized as a sacrament -- and by its repeated administration, due to the sinner's recurring need of forgiveness, it came to be considered one of the most important sacraments.(1) Further association with baptism is seen in the Church's teaching that estrangement from God, due to original sin, might be removed and redemption appropriated through the sacrament of the font; and also that man might be saved from estrangement caused by his own private sins through this sacrament of penance. Baptism took away all sins before its administration, while penance removed all mortal sins after baptism.

The early Church emphasized inward repentance as the condition of forgiveness, yet three atrocious sins (idolatry, homicide and adultery-or fornication) were punished by perpetual excommunication. This disciplinary measure was later held too severe, and was mitigated, although reconciliation was often deferred until the moment of death. The older rigorism, seen in Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Tertullian and Origen, appears to be mitigated after 250 A.D., the champions of leniency in penance being Callistus and Cyprian. Tertullian (2) and the Montanists maintained that the Church could forgive some sins, but not all -- the bishop could forgive lesser evils, but the more grievous ones must be left to God; but in Cyprian (3) we find exhortations to penance, for the "forgiveness granted by priests

- (1) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 243
- (2) Tertullian, De Pudicitia
- (3) Cyprian, De Bapsis

is acceptable to God". At Nicea (325) the Church ruled that sinners committing all capital sins might be reconciled before death, excepting the unpardonable sin of blaspheming against the Spirit.(1)

At this early date auricular confession to a priest was neither binding nor necessary, since a system of public penance through confession, or "exomologesis" (ἐξομολόγησις), and penitential exercises brought the guilty re-admission into the Christian community. The exercises varied, consisting mostly of prayer, fasting, prostration at the priest's feet, dressing in sack-cloth and ashes, scanty plain food, and harsh treatment of the body. This public method was abandoned in the East in 390 A.D., but continued in the West, where it was the means of producing many penitential books as guides for the system.(2) Necessity for public confession before communion is urged in these penitentials (3), with the privilege of partaking deferred from six to twelve months following. Slowly the public emphasis began to fade from practice; public penance came to be inflicted only for public sins, and this often with the aid of the secular arm. A too rigorous attitude toward the sinner was recognized as being more detrimental than beneficial; and consequently Leo I at Rome forbade public confession about 450 A.D. Individuals began to take their guilt privately to a priest, not so much to be absolved by him as to gain the benefit of his intercession with God, and the counsel he might give as to works of satisfaction pertinent to the case.

(1) Council of Nicea, canon 13

(2) E.g. the "Apostolical Constitutions", a collection of books dating from the 3rd and 4th centuries, which regulate the time of penance.

(3) Hastings, Encycl. of Religion and Ethics, IX, 712

With the decreasing number of public confessions, monachism unquestionably exerted an influence toward the monastic practice of privacy, and thus private penance in the presence of the priest became the rule.(1) With the elapse of time a new idea of confession had been developed and accepted: (a) confession must be made to a priest, and (b) the priest confers absolution as proceeding from himself (in the exercise of divine authority).(2) By the Middle Ages an elaborate penitential system had developed, on the principle that contrition, confession and priestly absolution occasion the removal of the guilt of sin and the eternal penalty due to the same, while a temporal penalty remains. This temporal penalty, unless cancelled by works of satisfaction or by indulgences, must be endured in purgatory. The practice of redeeming penance became general, wherein one might for a sum of money procure a proxy, equip a crusader, build a bridge, construct a monastery or Church, etc. This practice eventually sounded the death-knell to public penance, and encouraged indulgences, the system of purchasing forgiveness and merit. Hence arose the system of satisfaction, with indulgences, which was so influential in bringing about the Reformation.

The Church, of course, claimed that penance was a sacrament, divinely instituted by Christ (3); it was held to be at all times necessary for the remission of sins (4) and therefore necessary for salvation (5), and in the course of

- (1) Harnack, History of Dogma, V, 324-25
- (2) Ibid., VI, 255
- (3) Matt.16:9; 18:18; John 20:21-23, etc.
- (4) Council of Trent, Sess.XIV, canon 1.
- (5) Aquinas, Summa, III, Q.84, art.5

time came to be so completely saturated with the hierarchical spirit that it was considered practically the most important means of grace!(1) The purpose and justification of penance as a sacrament are admirably expressed by the Irish penitential, "Leabhar Breac":

"....the soul is healed by confession and declaration of the sins, with sorrow, and by the prayers of the Church, and a determination henceforth to observe the laws.... because Christ left His Apostles and Church, to the end of the world, the power of loosing and binding." (2)

This is included here because it sets forth the three acts required of the penitent: contrition, confession, and satisfaction. These in essence, as visible acts of the penitent, constitute the proximate matter of the sacrament, while the sins "to be detested and destroyed" are the remote matter. The form is found in the pronouncement of absolution ("Ego te absolvo") by the priest, and is an integral and indispensable part of the sacrament; such pronouncement is not merely declarative of remission, but instrumental in effecting the same. (3) The valid minister is the priest to whom confession must be made. It is well to note that confession began as a spontaneous act of the sinner who sought a reconciliation with God, but in the eyes of the ecclesiastics it could not remain entirely voluntary -- it was too essential for salvation. The Church, by the action of the Lateran Council (1215), made confession compulsory at least once a year.(4) This, in the opinion of Lea, is "perhaps the

(1) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 243

(2) Quoted from Hastings, Encycl. of Rel. and Ethics, IX, 712

(3) Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 84, art. 2, 3. The Council of Trent called contrition, confession and satisfaction the "quasi materia" of the sacrament. (Sess. XIV, can. 3). See Seeberg, Dogmengeschichte, III, 475 f.

(4) See chapter on "Enforced Confession" in Lea's History of Auricular Confession, etc., I, 227-273

most important legislative act in the history of the Church").

(1) It is well to note, however, that the Lateran edict did not establish confession, but presupposed the necessity of it in the Christian Church, and legislated as to its minimum frequency for the faithful. Aquinas asserts the necessity of confessing to a priest as well as to God (2), yet in the absence of a priest it was permitted to make confession to a layman, although then its efficacy was questioned by some.

The effect of the sacrament is deliverance from actual sin, and the peace of reconciliation with God, since in His mercy He always seeks to restore lost love. But actual sins, according to the Roman Church, are of two types, mortal and venial.(3) Mortal sins include a falling away from the state of grace, and therefore require a new infusion of grace if the sinner is to be restored to favor in the sight of God. Venial sins do not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace, and therefore do not necessitate a new infusion of grace.(4) Strictly speaking, as we view the sacrament as a means of grace, penance deals only with mortal sins, for it is held unnecessary, though advantageous, to confess venial sins to a priest.(5) Mortal sin is the "necessary" matter of confession; venial sin is the "sufficient" matter.(6) The duration of penance appears to have been interpreted in two ways: internally and externally. Internally it should cause the sinner to grieve over his committed sins

(1) Lea, History of Auricular Confession, I, 230

(2) Aquinas, Summa, Supplement.,Tertiae Part.,Q.8,art.1; see also Hagenbach, History of Doctrines, II, 367

(3) Supposedly from I John, 5:16-17

(4) Cf. Cath.Encycl.,XIV 4-11 on"Sin"; also see Aquinas, Summa, III, Q.87, art.2

(5) Pope Leo X's bull,"Exsurge domine",etc.-Seeberg, Dogmen.III,476. Yet Thomas makes a place for venial sins as well. Summa, III, Q.87, art.4

(6) Cath. Encycl., article on Penance, XI, 628

until the close of life; but externally the apparent signs of his grief, absolution and satisfaction, need not continue throughout life, "but only for a time determined by the measure of the sin"(1), which was determined by the Church and the priest.

The legal aspect of penance is seen in that the sinner is in confession at once the accuser, the person accused, and the witness, while the priest pronounces judgment and sentence.(2) By his sin the penitent has incurred both the guilt (culpa) of the sin and its punishment (poena), and if he seeks to be entirely free, then he must be delivered of both. Guilt is removed in contrition and confession, followed by priestly absolution. This once done, the sinner's obligation to everlasting punishment is changed to an obligation of temporal punishment -- mortal sin now being treated as venial.

"Per confessionem to a prest -- peccata occiduntur,
There contricioun doth but dryveth it down .. in-to
a venial synne." (3)

The magical "ex opere operato" workings of the sacrament may even by the power of grace remove all obligation to temporal punishment. But the temporal penalty may remain (4); then "payment" for the debt can be made in this world or the next through satisfaction and indulgences. It is an "eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" process which vitiates grace!"

The Church continued to hold until the thirteenth century that a perfect penitent disposition, prompted by love

- (1) Aquinas, Summa, III, Q.84, art.8; Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 246
- (2) Catholic Encyclopedia, XI, 618
- (3) Piers Plowman -- quoted from Hort's "Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought", 152
- (4) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 247

("contritio"), was required in the sacrament.(1) This contrition was held to be the sine qua non of forgiveness. But the perverse opinion finally crept in that an imperfect contrition could be made perfect by the power of the sacrament! What man lacked in the way of a penitent heart was compensated for in the magic of mere penance itself. Thus "attritio" is the terminus a quo of the sacrament, while "contritio" is the terminus ad quem. And, as Harnack points out (2), this opinion that imperfection could become perfection -- that "attritio" can and does become "contritio"(3) -- actually became dominant. A fear of hell was ennobled to become true sorrow for sins by the sacrament of penance -- sheer casuistry in making something to be what it obviously is not!

The legalistic banking concept in penance is seen in the Church's theory of satisfaction and indulgences. By some means other than the strict fulfilment of the debt of sin, the sinner sought to discharge his obligation to the satisfaction of God, and of the priest who spoke as an "authorized minister" of God. But we must note with care here that satisfaction is not restitution; the sinner beforehand must have done all he can to make restitution to those whom he has offended -- otherwise satisfaction cannot be accomplished acceptably unto God. Since the law does not punish twice for the same offence, neither does God; therefore all punishment met by satisfaction in this life will mean so much less to be endured in the life to

(1) So held Hugo of St. Victor, Abelard, Peter the Lombard, etc. Cf. Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma*, VI, 243-4. A good discussion of "contritio" and "attritio" appears in Seeberg, *Dogmengeschichte*, III, 533-537 (1930 Ed.)

(2) Harnack, *op. cit.*, 248

(3) Openly expressed in Bonaventura; suggested in Alexander of Hales. Cf. Harnack, *op. cit.*, 249-250

come. Hence arose the belief that satisfaction continues in a state called purgatory. Baron von Hügel has pointedly remarked that to the medieval mind purgatory was more often a "satisfactorium" than a "purgatorium".(1) The practice of the Church was more and more to impose lenient requirements in satisfaction, on the theory that it was better to leave a soul longer in purgatory than to drive him to despair by strict requirement, and thus cause him to be sent to hell. This easy-going attitude is revealed by the following passage in Myrc's "Instruction for Parish Priests":

"Bettur hyt ys wyth penaunce lutte,
In-to purgatory a mon to putte,
Then wyth penaunce over myche,
Sende hym to helle putte." (2)

Growing out of this legalistic banking theory, indulgences came to be known as a way of "remission" of punishment through the treasury of merit.(3) Strictly speaking, the term "remission" is not accurate, but it was current in the Middle Ages in this connection.(4) It was more accurately a substitution process, for to the medieval mind a complete exemption from punishment would have been dissonant with God's justice; therefore external merit was substituted for the sinner's debt. Thus out of the practice of commuting, or making easier the penitential acts, grew the system of indulgences (5) -- e.g. fines were imposed instead of bodily punishment. What supposedly took place was a transfer of merit from the Church to the sinning

(1) The Mystical Element in Religion, II, 240

(2) Lines 59-62 (quoted from Hort's Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought, 146)

(3) Seeberg, Dogmen., III, 491-493

(4) Aquinas uses it regularly -- cf. Summa, III, Q.87

(5) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 260

individual. This treasury of merit was made up of "supererogatory works" -- a surplus of merit wrought by Christ and the saints. If Christ had done more in His passion than was necessary for redemption, then this extra merit was given to the Church to dispense; and even some of the saints had so lived and wrought that they acquired merit for others, thereby adding to the great spiritual bank account on which the Church alone might draw checks for the spiritually poor through the sacrament of penance. Here the Church "discloses indulgences", and closes the gates of hell!(1) But the gates of purgatory were flung wide open for the multitudes. Those owing a debt to God might receive a grant of merit from this never-failing supply of supererogatory works, and thus God in the end might receive His due. Basically, of course, the remission of sins was founded upon the redemption of Christ, but the practice permitted a reliance upon material values so that the works of man were eventually elevated above the atoning grace of Christ. Devotion to Christ and the saints was the center of faith, not from the conception of man's unmerited favor of God, but from the conception of accumulated treasures which the sinner might utilize. It was this selfish grasp for these merits that helped to make contrition out of mere attrition, and the unworthy person was thus claimed worthy.

However, this system of indulgences proved both a corruptive and a disruptive force in the Church; corruptive in encouraging simony, and later made applicable to the dead (2);

- (1) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 261
- (2) H.C. Lea, History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences, III, Ch. VI, on "Application to the Dead", 296-371

and disruptive in the rising protests against the system which culminated in the revolt of the Reformation. The theory of indulgences, born out of the practices of the Church, became too arbitrary, and exercised in the end a detrimental, even ruinous effect on true Christianity.(1) It caused our faith to take the defensive, while the offensive was forgotten. The followers of Christ became primarily interested in warding off coming punishment. The negative life was made superior to the positive, and all the while a corruptive influence was being fostered, unconsciously perhaps, which permitted shameful means to be employed in order to gain temporal advantages. It is natural that opposition in due time would arise, and we see it exemplified in the violent attacks of Wyclif in the fourteenth century. Harnack has not over-stated the case when he says:

"Against no other ecclesiastical practice and theory did Wyclif assume so determined an attitude as against indulgences." (2)

The sacrament of penance, along with the sacrament of the Eucharist, brought forth Wyclif's most bitter condemnation, though he believed sincerely in both -- but not as the Church taught. To him the Church had plainly been misled in these two important means of grace:

"Duo sunt sacramenta precipua in quibus ecclesia est illusa, scilicet sacramentum eucharistie et sacramentum penitencie." (3)

It is only natural -- as is true with the works of nearly all the great reformers -- that more material is available in Wyclif's writings on these two sacraments than on the other five sacraments combined.

(1) Harnack, op.cit., VI, 260

(2) Ibid., VI, 267

(3) De Eucharistia et Poenitentia, 329

In our endeavor to interpret and evaluate Wyclif's conception of penance we shall treat first of contrition, then confession, and finally satisfaction, with some references to absolution and indulgences-- realizing, however, that these three constituent parts of penance are not altogether mutually exclusive. Wyclif himself recognized this order in penance, saying:

"Consistit autem vera penitencia in cordis contricione, in oris confessione et operis satisfactione, quia hiis tribus modis peccatur in Deum." (1)

No true penance exists if any of these essential parts is lacking.(2)

I. "CONTRITIO". Wyclif believed in the necessity of a true contrition of heart for the forgiveness of sin. Since he had little faith in the "ex opere operato" working of the sacraments in general, it is natural to find him opposed to the theory that attrition may in this sacrament become contrition. He calls attrition "the first tendency to sorrow, which is not sufficient to remove sin";(3) and in the same paragraph of the Trialogus he shows that men must experience true contrition of heart if sins are to be removed. It is absolutely necessary for forgiveness, and all else is but accessory.(4) In one of his Latin sermons he puts it thus:

"Nam sine contricione Deus non remittit et ipso non remittente non valet sacerdotis absolucio." (5)

He further distinguishes between the two attitudes by saying:

"Quod differunt attricio et contricio, cum attricio sit dolor primus et insufficiens

- (1) Sermones, IV, XXXV, 299; see also Sermones, III, 67-69; De Eucharistia, 330.
- (2) De Blasphemia, 111-112
- (3) Trialogus, IV, XXIV, 330
- (4) De Blasphemia, 140
- (5) Sermones, IV, XLII, 347

pro peccato et contritio est dolor sufficiens
ad peccatum delendum." (1)

Contrition, then, and not attrition is adequate -- he speaks of it again as the "dolor sufficiens ad deletionem peccati"(2). Thus for Wyclif contrition is the very foundation upon which the sacrament of penance must rest.(3) Perhaps with no little irony he points out in one of his Latin sermons the ignorance of the prelates, for they cannot possibly tell what actually constitutes attrition or contrition:

"Ignorant autem indubie quando est
attritio et quando contritio eciam in se ipsis,
et per consequens ignorant quantus dolor requi-
ratur et sufficit ut peccatum hominis deleatur",etc.(4)

Wyclif is plain to say that, assuming absolution to be just, no one has the right to grant it when the state of the penitent in confession is not known.(5) It might be true contrition on the part of the confessing individual. or it might be mere attrition, which is not sufficient for the forgiveness of sins. No one can be saved without penitence of mind ("nisi mente peniteat"(6)) -- and we can safely judge from the context of this and other similar passages that he does not limit this to a purely intellectual sense.

In Wyclif's ethical system, which is consistent with his theology, we note that humility which leads to contrition is foremost among the virtues; while pride which leads to apostasy is foremost among the sins.(7) True humility and contrition

- (1) Sermones, IV, VI, 57
- (2) Trialogus, IV, 330; cf. Sermones, IV, 347
- (3) Sermones, IV, 97
- (4) Sermones, II, XVIII, 138
- (5) Sermones, III, IV, 27; De Euch. et Poen., 337
- (6) De Potestate Papae, 310
- (7) Trialogus, III, X, 162-163; De Civ. Dom., III, 192-193; cf. Lechler's discussion, 279

will lead to confession of guilt. He sets forth the need for immediate contrition and confession, which must not be postponed, for the Apostle said not generally that the time is at hand, but more strictly, "The hour now is".(1) If deferred it is dangerous.(2) The intensity of one's sorrow for sin is not to be judged by the quantity of grief made evident, nor by its duration, but by both of these considered together. And the sincerity of the one who is truly penitent will be seen in that he will not return to his past sins.(3) The individual knows whether he himself is truly contrite, and no other person is qualified to judge; it is a "satanic presumption" for the administrator of the sacrament to attempt to judge!(4)

But at best even true contrition does not merit forgiveness, for this comes only through God's grace in Christ. Man's merit through contrition is only "meritum de congruo", and never in the full sense of worthiness, "meritum de condigno", which comes only through prevenient grace.(5) We must admit that Wyclif does speak of man's merit and demerit, but never in the full sense that man by his own goodness can earn salvation. Man's merit is not of his own power, but is wrought by the grace of God in Christ.(6) He gives something of a definition of merit, saying that it is that done by a rational creature which is worthy of reward. It may be both "meritum de condigno" and "meritum de congruo" in a sense, as a man can be both father

(1) Sermones, IV, XXIII, 205

(2) Ibid., IV, XXXV, 302

(3) Trialogus, IV, XXIV, 331

(4) Ibid., IV, XXIV, 331

(5) De Dominio Divino, III, V, 242; and VI, 249 f.

(6) Ibid., III, V, 226; De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, II, 223; and III, 153

and son, lord and servant. It is the former in relation to one set in authority, who rewards without grace; but it is the latter in relation to God, who rewards by grace.(1)

II. "CONFESSIO". Having examined the Reformer's view of contrition, we turn now to confession, and find that Wyclif devoted much time and space to the discussion of this subject. He is, of course, opposed to the Church's position, but does not condemn all confession. In his opinion we need to beware of two extremes of error: (a) that a man ought never to confess, and (b) that confession when made must follow certain strict lines and regulations.(2) Confession when made must be made either to God, or to a priest (or individual); the first is necessary (3), but not the second, although the latter may be useful or wholesome.(4) Wyclif denies the absolute, rather than the relative necessity of the sacrament of penance.(5) An extended argument is employed in a number of places to show that confession to man is unnecessary and superfluous, for the general confession in the Mass may suffice (6); and lengthy quotations are drawn from the Church Fathers and the great ecclesiastics to support his position -- e.g. Chrysostom, Augustine, Hugo of St. Victor, Grosseteste, etc.(7) An entire tract, "Of Confession" (8) is devoted to the proof that auricular confession

- (1) De Dominio Divino, III, VI, 249
- (2) De Blasphemia, 140
- (3) Polemical Works, II, 623
- (4) Sermones, III, 67; and IV, 100-101; De Pot.Pap., 310
- (5) De Blasphemia, 288
- (6) Ibid., 112-113
- (7) Ibid., 139-141
- (8) Matthew's English Works, 325-345. Workman thinks this is a loose translation of his Latin "De Eucharistia et Poenitentia sive de Confessione" (Workman, II, 41 note).

is not sacramentally necessary -- a bold position for the Reformer to take, since it ran counter to ecclesiastical law, and to the high importance attached to ecclesiastical penance, since according to the Church man could not be saved without it.(1) In this English work Wyclif raises his voice in protest:

"We shulden beleue that grace of god is so gret & plentyuouse, that if a man synne neuer so miche ne so longe in his lyue, if he wole aske of god mercye & be contrite for his synne, god wole forgyve him his synne withouten siche iapes feyned of prestis." (2)

Wyclif asserts that Scripture commands neither confession, nor abstinence from it.(3) It is not indispensable, for Mary Magdalene's repentance was genuine, yet she had not been to confession (4); and many martyrs have been saved without this confession to a priest which the Church deems so necessary.(5) Briefly and pointedly his position is stated in the following manner:

"It were to wite over in this mater, whether prive confession, made to prestis, be nedeful to synful men, and where this confession is groundid. And it semeth that it is not nedful, but brought in late be the fend, for Crist, al-witty, used it not, ne noon of Hise apostles aftur. And if it were nedful to man, Crist wolde have used it or taught it." (6)

It is certainly an unfounded law, its origin being with Innocent III and not in Holy Scripture:

"Et sic videtur Spiritum Sanctum negligeret sacramentum tam necessarium obmisisse. Nam Actuum II et infra legitur Petrum, Paulum et ceteros apostolos multa milia populi convertisse.

- (1) De Eucharistia, 331
- (2) Of Confession, Matthew's English Works, 339
- (3) De Blasphemia, 141
- (4) Sermones, II, 133, 138
- (5) De Blasphemia, IX, 139 f.; De Eucharistia, 333
- (6) Of Confession, Winn's "Wyclif, Select English Writings", 94

Et non recolo aliquem conversum istud novum sacramentum a sacerdote aliquo accepisse, nec Christus nec Baptista nec aliquis apostolus ista sacramentali penitencia quam nos cognoscimus usus fuit. Ideo dicit doctor decretorum Johannes de Deo quod istud sacramentum a quadam institutione pape cepit originem, quem quidam dicunt fuisse Innocencium III."(1)

But Wyclif's greatest contention is not so much against confession as it is against enforced confession. He realizes that confession has its place, for he says:

"To make hoolynesse in men is confession nedful; and therfor shuld hooly Churche witt sunwhat of confession." (2)

But he is vehement in his condemnation of making it obligatory, which the Church had sought to do in the great Lateran Council of 1215-1216, when it decreed that confession to a priest is compulsory at least once a year.(3)

"Ideo respondendo ad istos obiectus dicitur primo quod necesse est peccatori cuius peccata delenda sunt contricione animi penitere; sed ex hoc non inferitur quod sit tam necessaria verbalis confessio sacerdoti." (4)

When the coercive element in confession is considered, the Oxford Reformer is always with the opposition. He points out that the Greek Church has confession, but does not impose it as an obligation (5); and the folly of the Church's legislation is seen in that, according to its own theory, "all the dead from Christ's ascension to the time of Innocent III are lost"! (6) Such legislation is merely designed to increase popish power:

"And thus it semeth to many men that Antecrist hath cast this cast to make alle men soget to the Pope, and lede hem aftur that hym likith. Lord, where is fredom of Crist whenne men ben casten

- (1) De Eucharistia et Poenitentia, in De Euch., 331
- (2) Of Confession, Winn's Sel. Eng. Writings, 94
- (3) Innocent III's decree, "Omnis utriusque sexus", etc.; see De Pontificum Romanorum Schismate, S.E.W.III, 255
- (4) De Eucharistia et Poenitentia, in De Euch. 332-333
- (5) De Blasphemia, IX, 139-140
- (6) Trialogus, IV, XXIII, 327

in sicke bondage? Crist made Hise servauntis free
but Antecrist hath made hem bonde ageyne. And
cerus ther is noo autorite that gave him leve to
make men thus thrallis." (1)

He further objects to these binding laws of the Church because confession must be made to the parish priest, and thereby one's freedom is curtailed, for one must have the priest's consent to change and make confession to another. This amounts to begging leave of mere man for that which Christ's law permits one to do.

(2) Rather sarcastically he says that if confession is to be obligatory, then the Pope must provide proper priests (3), for it is dangerous to confess to a bad one (4); yet it is impossible to provide fit priests everywhere! (5) (Perhaps here is another hint of his growing belief toward the end of his life that character is the test of function.) He concludes that the existing law of the Church is not only lacking in Scriptural authority, but it is unjust (6) -- even blasphemous. (7) It may help some few men, but in reality it brings harm to the Church. (8) Coercion can really apply only to external acts, whereas confession is from within. (9) Here he reveals some of his anti-sacramentarian, anti-sacerdotal views, holding that God can give grace without the ministry of the priests, for baptism may be complete through the blood and the Spirit, and eucharistic grace may be imparted without sensible signs. Therefore, it is blasphemous to say that without confession to a priest no one can be saved. (10) He makes confession only a means to an end, and this end may be

(1) Of Confession, in Winn, 94-95

(2) De Blasphemia, 122-123. A definite slap
at ecclesiastical jurisdiction!

(3) Ibid., 114

(4) Ibid., 141

(5) De Eucharistia et Poenitentia, in De Euch., 334

(6) De Blasphemia, 126-127

(7) Ibid., 117

(8) De Pontificium Romanorum Schismate, S.E.W., III, 255

(9) De Blasphemia, 136

(10) Ibid., 138-139

attained without the alleged necessary confession to a human being. This thought, when carried to its logical conclusion, undermines the whole system of absolution and priestly power, for with confession gone it follows that absolution is gone, and the priestly power of the keys is gone.(1)

We have already set forth the Reformer's views as to the necessity of a worthy character on the part of the administrator in the sacraments, and no change of view is expressed in connection with penance. The priest to whom confession is made must be worthy in character. Confession is harmful if made to a simoniacal priest-- and Wyclif hints that all prelates may be included in the category of those guilty of simony, and if such be true the individual desiring to confess should prefer one of the faithful laity.(2) Also the priest must be one predestined to salvation, for one might as well confess to the devil himself as to an idolatrous, simoniacal heretic, who is interested only in receiving money.(3) In the same passage he ventures to say that confessions would no longer be heard by most priests if no money were forthcoming from the penitents. Wyclif thus holds the whole of the system of auricular confession to be built upon avarice.(4) He claimed that simony was rampant in this sacrament-- a fact which will be brought out in connection with indulgences. Any hint made by a priest that monies received in this sacrament would be used by him is sufficient cause, Wyclif thinks, to shun that priest

(1) See Vaughan's "John de Wycliffe- A Monograph",
266

(2) De Blasphemia, 117, 125. He quotes Augustine
in support.

(3) De Blasphemia, 144

(4) Polemical Works, II, 622

forever.(1)

Wyclif sees great evil resulting from the privacy of the confessional, and therefore says that auricular confession was introduced by the devil (2), and instituted by the papacy. (3) He urges that public confession is better than private, for the privacy of the confessional box often leads to gluttony, unchastity and the sins of lust.(4)

"Also thes newe religious, and namely freris, distroien and disturben the pees and reste of the kyng and his rewme; thorough privei confession thei norischen moche synne, namely lecherie, avout-rie, and synne agennis kynde, extorsions and robberie and usure, for to have pert therof, and tellen not the treuthe in confession, for drede of lesyng bothe frendisschipe and wyning, and meyntening of here feyned ordre."(5)

Lollardy after Wyclif's death continued to condemn the private confessional, holding that deadly sins are induced by its "secret talks".(6) It is better to confess to two priests at one time than to one alone.(7) The practice of the Church is not consistent with Scripture, Wyclif thinks, for it implies that confession is not valid if overheard -- yet that can easily happen without priest or penitent knowing about it. And if the secret confession is made public, what is that but to reveal what will be made known at the Judgment Day -- and the public revelation may prove wholesome for the penitent. Public confession is better than private because it involves greater shame and remorse, the intensity of contrition is increased, and therefore

(1) De Blasphemia, 144

(2) Opus Evangelium, IV, 305 f.

(3) Sermones, III, 67 f.

(4) De Blasphemia, 121, 173; Opus Evang., III, 40; De Euch., 339; Of Confession, Matt, Eng. Works, 330

(5) Ye Grete Sentence of Curs Expounded, XI, 299, in S. E. W., 111

(6) Cf. Workman, II, 396

(7) Of Confession, Matt. Eng. Works, 335

the confession is more meritorious.(1) The Bible seems to stress public confession -- here he mentions how the sin of Ananias and Sapphira was made known. The good thief on the Cross made a public confession, and it was found acceptable. To hide sin is but to observe the sacrament of the devil.(2) The abominable practice of "whispering in a priest's ear" he could not accept, and in one place almost gives us a definition of confession in condemning it:

"Here we shulen undirstonde, that confessioun, that Crist nameth here (Matt.10:26) is not rownyng in preestis eere, to telle him synne that we han done, but it is grauntinge of treuthe, the which is apertly seid, with redines to suffre therfore, what ever man denyeth it." (3)

A few minor points should be brought forward before concluding this discussion of confession. Wyclif, as a proponent of the vernacular, characteristically held that confession, when made to a priest, should be made in English.(4) The freedom which he advocated in this sacrament should not be hampered by the medium of a strange language. Friars may beg in French (5), hold Mass in Latin, etc., but should hear confession in the vernacular. Our Reformer is, of course, against the general practice of making confession to the friars, for confession when made to the clergy ought to be made to one's own parish priest (a position which is inconsistent with his demand for freedom in choosing the priest confessor). The following paragraph shows his utter abhorrence of the "pretended confessions" of the friars:

"The sixth and worst abuse of the friars consists in their pretended confessions, by means

- (1) De Blasphemia, 156,157,165; De Eucharistia, 335
- (2) De Blasphemia, 166
- (3) Sermon LXIII, S. E. W., I, 196
- (4) Sermones, III, 222
- (5) Ibid., III, 222

of which they affect, with numberless artifices of blasphemy, that they can purify those whom they confess, and make them clean from all pollution in the eyes of God, through this assumed power of Antichrist, -- setting aside the commandments and satisfaction of our Lord. Thus, in their eagerness to participate in the gain of their master the devil, they drag but too many down to hell.... they may be said not so much to send men to hell as to drag them thither." (1)

Private confessors were condemned by Wyclif, for although they may be fashionable and popular, they are harmful both to the individual and to the Church. A private confessor may be a "feend of helle".(2) Also confession should be full and particular, not dealing with vague generalities, but expressing specific details concerning the sin, such as person, substance, place, act, time, hindrance, occasion, and accomplice.(3) He appears here to agree with Peter Bromyard's rule that a good confession may be recognized by its length, a bad one by its brevity. Wyclif does not advise that voluntary confession should be made only once a year; to postpone it is dangerous.(4) Sins of the whole year may be hard to recall; it is better to confess a sin whenever it is committed.(5) Yet leading theologians (Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, etc.) held that it sufficed to confess within the time limits prescribed by the Church.

III. "SATISFACTIO". Concerning satisfaction as a part of penance, we have already indicated Wyclif's position that man's contrition "per se" could never merit satisfaction -- that comes only through Christ. But satisfaction is an essential part

(1) Trialogus, IV, XXXV, 372

(2) Of Confession, Matt. Eng. Works, 334-335

(3) Sermones, IV, 303-304

(4) Ibid., IV, 302

(5) Ibid., IV, 304. He follows William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris, 1228-1249, in holding that confession should be made as soon as possible.

of penance, for even God in His divine justice is not able to dismiss guilt without satisfaction.(1) The Reformer therefore holds a high view of satisfaction, but not in the sense of what man can do; it is rather in the sense of what Christ has already done. Any absolutions granted by the priests are made possible through the forgiveness of Christ; in fact priestly forgiveness is non-essential:

"For no man mai forgyve synne but if Crist forgyve it first." (2)

"And so Criste taughte bi this dede assoilinge of men is not but yif God assoile bifore, as God himsilf assoilide thes leprous. And so preestis assoilen as Goddis vikeris, according to Goddis assoilinges", etc. (3)

"We bileven on Cristis lawe that yif man synnede nevere so longe, and were nevere asoylid of Pope ne of his prest undir hym, yif he wolde forsake his synne and be contrit for former synne and ende his lif on this maner, God wolde forgyve hym his synne." (4)

One great difficulty in satisfaction was the terrible inequality of penances imposed by different priests.(5) The whole matter eventually became systematized, mechanical, and inevitably meaningless for many.

Wyclif's vehement attack against ecclesiastical absolution and indulgences is consistent with his emphasis upon the inner spiritual life of man and his condemnation of unscriptural, man-made externalities in the practice of the Church. He insisted that the words of absolution, "Ego te absolvo", etc., are not to be found in Scripture, and thus one must conclude

- (1) Trialogus, III, XXIV, 213
- (2) Of Mynystrie in the Chirche, S.E.W., II, 417
- (3) Sermon XIV, S.E.W., I, 35
- (4) De Papa -- Winn's Selections, 75
- (5) De Blasphemia, 151

either that the sacramental absolution is unnecessary, or that God was neglectful!(1) Great inaccuracy of language occurs when it is commonly said that the priest absolves the penitent. What actually takes place is that the priest simply declares the penitent to be absolved -- for God alone does the absolution; no creature can perform it.(2) Too great a variety is found in the kinds of absolution given, and of all the forms employed, that of the Greek Church is the least evil, for it is only a prayer that God will absolve the sinner.(3) Logical consistency is wanting when men are absolved by prelates (especially the friars) from penalties which are not even incurred.(4) For the same sins different priests command different penances, and different absolutions follow. Surely one or the other must err.(5) The easy absolution of the friars was a thing of scandal in Wyclif's day, and the Reformer condemned it as that which encouraged men to continue in sin (6), thereby defeating the purpose for which the sacrament was intended.

The amazing claim of the power of the keys is seen in absolution, for here the most lowly, common monk in any of the various orders of the Church claims a power which is beyond that claimed by Peter and the other apostles:

"In illis autem que oportet esse mundo, ut virtutibus, potestate atque noticia, simulant sanctitatem, dicentes quod habent plus potestatis quam Petrus vel alius Christi apostolus, eo quod absolvunt a pena et culpa et facientes miracula multa abscondita dant ampliores indulgencias quam aliquis apostolus unquam dedit."(7)

- (1) De Blasphemia, 123
- (2) De Civ. Dom., I, 259-260
- (3) Matthew's English Works, 332
- (4) Sermones, IV, 123
- (5) De Blasphemia, 118
- (6) Sermones, III, 501; De Blasphemia, 173;
S. E. W., III, 393-394
- (7) Sermones, III, XXXII, 261

To what extent the Oxford Reformer recognized the power of the keys is most difficult to determine. He recognizes it to some extent when he says:

"Petris keyes schulde noght perrische,
but be furbusched and clensid of the rust of heresie."(1)

And yet we have seen that to him priestly forgiveness is non-essential, and the office of the priest is at best declaratory, for priests are only messengers to witness to the people that it is God who really absolves. (For further discussion see chapter on Orders.)

Wyclif is quick to point out the many difficulties which arise out of the tremendous claim of the Church in the power of the keys. A confessor cannot always know a man's sin, or be sure that the penitent is worthy of absolution; and it is a poor defense to say that absolution is given conditionally, "if and so far as God wills".(2) He shows clearly that this conditional penance is not good, for it involves no certainty of pardon, and formal absolution without certainty can be performed by anyone, clergy and laity alike.(3) And since absolution is from God alone (4), in a sense all priestly absolution is conditional, for it is granted only in conformity to Christ's holy will.(5) Yet the hierarchical tendencies of the age were continually working toward a more emphatic conception of absolution as a priestly prerogative, and in the course of time absolution came to be considered by the laity of the Church as a power residing not in Christ, but in the priest himself -- a definite

(1) De Pont. Rom. Schism., V, S.E.W., III, 255

(2) Sermones, II, 139

(3) De Blasphemia, 124; also Matt. Eng. Works, 333;
S. E. W., III, 252

(4) De Pot. Pape, 27 f

(5) Sermones, IV, 102

move away from the conception of a mere declaratory power in the priest. But Wyclif was not thus to be deceived, for he openly doubted the ability of priests to assoil, and especially so if their characters are in question:

"For as they synnen in other thing,
so they synnen in this poynt; for he that dis-
cordith fro goddis wille in his lif & in his dede
may lightly discorde fro god in profecye of siche
asoyling." (1)

But not only did he deny that priests alone can assoil; he also emphasized the Protestant position that the efficacy of the sacrament depends upon the condition of heart in the recipient.

Thus he expressed the conditions for valid absolution:

"And so thi confessour can nought wyte
whether thou be bound or soyled, but bi supposynge
that he hath of thi trewe speche, ffor there is no
more heresie than man to bileve that he is assoyled
yif he geve hym moneye, or yif he leye his hond on
thin heed, and seie that he assoyllith thee. Ffor thou
moste by sorowe of herte make aseeth to God, and ellis
God assoyllith thee noght, and thanne assoyllith noght
thi viker." (2)

One's standing in the hierarchy of the Church does not affect absolution, for the Reformer held that a simple priest could grant it as well as the Pope.(3) The reservation of absolution was but a "new trick of the Roman curia" -- in fact a good layman might perform absolution better than a wicked priest!(4) The usual seriousness of the Reformer descends to humor when he says that a one-eyed man can see the folly of the Church trying to reserve absolution to itself:

"Sed monoculis est satis cognitum
quod ista reservacio absolucionis ad curiam est
contra caritatis regulas non fundata."(5)

(1) De Papa, 12, Matt. Eng. Works, 481

(2) De Pontificium Romanorum Schismate, IV,
S. E. W., III, 252

(3) De Potestate Papae, 31

(4) Of Confession, Matt. Eng. Works, 333

(5) De Eucharistia et Poenitentia, De Euch., 340

Perhaps even in the Middle Ages Wyclif understood the psychology of condemning a thing by laughing at it, though we admit that he seldom used this method.

Another point which Wyclif urged has been hinted -- namely that a full absolution could not be given to a penitent by a priest, for, assuming the absolution to be just and valid, it effaced only mortal sins, and the venial sins remained.(1) Plenary absolution was therefore not possible, according to the strict teachings of the Church, for the newly infused grace of the sacrament of penance had properly no connection with sins which were venial. Its proper sphere was that of mortal sins alone.

In the closing part of Chapter XI in "De Blasphemia" the Reformer discusses five specific problems that arise in confession and absolution. The first is the problem of whether it is sufficient for one in mortal sin to do penance; and Wyclif's answer is that it is not enough, for valid absolution cleanses only from mortal sins, and venial sins remain.(2) Hence plenary absolution is impossible, as we have seen. This, however, is a strange application of a principle which he denies elsewhere, for he claims that it is a dangerous and unauthorized practice to distinguish between mortal and venial sins; such differentiation does not have the support of the Scriptures.(3) We feel that the Reformer is quite inconsistent here, for he employs an argument to prove a point which he

(1) De Blasphemia, 169

(2) Ibid., 168-169

(3) Octo in quibus seductur simplices Christiani, S. E. W., III, 452. Also S. E. W., II, 32, and III, 120, where it appears that he makes a distinction, but it must logically follow that no venial sins then exist!

denies absolutely in another place! Many inconsistencies may be pointed out in Wyclif, but in reality the most of them can be explained by his change of thought as he matured in his Protestant thinking, but it does not seem that this one can be so dismissed.(1)

The second problem is whether the repetition of the same sins in confession is profitable; his answer is that such repetition is not profitable, but only a waste of time. Third, the problem of whether the penitent must accomplish the penance prescribed is mentioned, but not answered; too many logical subtleties here cause the Reformer to conclude that it is an unanswerable question. Fourth, the problem of whether spiritual kinship exists between the confessor and the penitent is cited; and Wyclif answers that there is such a relationship, but refuses to dwell on the difficulties which arise from this thought. And finally, there is the problem of whether a man can be twice guilty of the very same sin, since a "foreknown", though he may have been repentant in life, will be judged for all his sins, and the same sins must therefore return; and to this problem Wyclif gives the reply that it is not the same sin which returns. Many features may be identical to make it appear to be the same sin, such as the matter, etc., but the time and acts are different.(2)

"Indulgencia". In considering indulgences, we are immediately brought face to face with Wyclif's conception of purgatory. Throughout the most of his writings he accepts purgatory- or at least takes it for granted (3)- which fact has led many

(1) Cf. Workman, II, 9-11, especially concerning the alleged prayer of Gregory for Trojan.

(2) De Blasphemia, 170-171

(3) Ibid., 118-119, 151; S. E. W., III, 53, 116, 236, 339, etc.

writers to hold that Wyclif held to a belief in purgatory to the last.(1) His views in this respect are by no means consistent, showing perhaps a doubt and a wavering in his mind; but in his closing years, at the time of his latest polemical works in Latin, he not only doubted the existence of purgatory, but actually denied it,(2) thus upsetting his three-fold conception of of the Church as consisting of angels in heaven, saints sleeping in purgatory, and those alive who shall be saved.(3) Eventually the doctrine of purgatory was to the Reformer nothing more than a pious fraud ("pia mendacia")(4), and we agree with Miss Holt in her conclusion that:

"The evangelical view, therefore, upon this head, appears to be one of the last convictions adopted by the Reformer."(5)

We must admit, in all fairness, that some of his late sermons speak of the meritorious work of charity which shortens the sufferings of souls in purgatory (6) -- a purgatory which in his thinking necessarily ended at the Day of Judgment.(7) Yet even later sermons ridicule prayers for the dead (8), which

- (1) Wordsworth (Address, op.cit.,33); Lingard (cf.Hague, op.cit.,152); Wilkins, viii, 347; and Vaughan tries carefully to justify Wyclif's belief in purgatory, apparently unaware that he late in life rejected the view - Life and Op., II, 321-326. (1828 ed.)
- (2) Polemical Works, I, 146-148, especially 148
- (3) He often termed it the Church triumphant (in heaven), the Church dormant (in purgatory), and the Church militant (on earth). Polemical Works, I, 147
- (4) De Ver. Sac. Script., II, 56
- (5) E. S. Holt, "John de Wycliffe", 179
- (6) Sermones, IV, 433
- (7) Of Prelates, XIII-Matt. Eng. Works, 81. (The authenticity of this tract is questioned seriously by Workman, and even the editor Matthew, though the latter admits "it contains no opinions that are not found in his genuine writings". p.52)
- (8),Sermones, IV, 28-33. My authority for "later" is Workman, II, 18, note.

would indicate that he either had discarded a belief in purgatory, or else held no hope for the recovery of souls imprisoned there. Principal Workman concludes concerning the Reformer, "He refused to search for the place, duration, or manner of purgation".(1) Many of the Lollards retained some faith in purgatory, which is seen in their leaving bequests for masses to be said for the repose of their souls; but Wyclif opposed the doctrine, not in strong terms of open condemnation of the practice, but by saying enough to let us know that he placed very little faith in the efficacy of such prayers, trentals, and masses.

In connection with, and in full support of this view is the Reformer's position in regard to the treasury of merits. Here no question arises as to his opinion, for it is clearly put:

"Supponunt enim primo, quod in coelis sint infinita sanctorum supererogata merita, et specialiter meritum Domini nostri Jesu Christi, quod sufficeret salvare mundos alios infinitos; et super totum illum thesaurum Christus papam constituit, ad, secundum quod sibi libuerit, dispensandum; ideo infinitum de illo potest distribuere, cum hoc quod remaneat infinitum.

Contra istam rudem blasphemiam invexi alias, primo sic; nec papa nec etiam Dominus Jesus Christus potest dispensare cum aliquo nec dare indulgentias, nisi ut aeternaliter Deitas justo consilio diffinivit. Sed non docetur, quod papa vel homo aliquis potest habere colorem justitiae taliter faciendi; igitur non docetur quod papa talem habeat potestatem." (2)

He further shows that no faith should be placed in the merits of the saints:

" & merueile it is that synful foolis doren graunte ony thing of meritis of seyntis; for al that euere ony seynt dide may not brynge o soule to heuene with-oute grace & myght of cristis passion," etc. (3)

(1) Workman, II, 19

(2) Trialogus, IV, XXXII, 358; cf. also De Pot. Pap., 208; De Ecclesia, 551

(3) Of Prelates, Cap.13, Matt. Eng. Works, 83

The whole treasury of merits is but a fiction (1); the blessed have no merits accumulated for sinners, and if they have, these merits are not transferable.(2) Wyclif completely rejected the mediatorship of the saints, for Christ alone is the Mediator between God and sinful man.(3) Only His merit can assure salvation. (4)

Wyclif anticipated Luther in his opposition to indulgences, for he employed the same vehemence which the monk of Wittenberg used against this simoniacal practice of the Church. What restraint the Oxford Reformer might have used elsewhere -- his tone is usually moderate -- apparently is cast to the winds when he seeks for language to express his hatred of indulgences. In the Trialogus the following terms may be found to show his complete contempt for the practice:

1. "blasphemous presumption of the friars".(350, 357)
2. "Luciferian seductions of the Church".(360)
3. "imaginary rapine".(358)
4. "hypocritical traffic".(349, 350)
5. "radical heresy".(350)
6. "maniac concessions".(352)
7. "manifest blasphemy".(352, 357)
8. "Luciferian presumption".(351)
9. "simoniacal heresy".(349) ---- etc.

Many passages might be cited, from both his Latin and English works, to prove his ardent opposition to indulgences and letters of fraternity, yet we must permit only a few of the choicest to suffice:

"Et sic debemus ex sufficienti evidencia credere sociis cum quibus communiter conversamur, sed non habemus ex fide credere omni spiritui quem audimus, nec indulgenciis debemus

- (1) Sermones, IV, 101, 174
- (2) Ibid., IV, 185
- (3) Trialogus, III, Cap. 30
- (4) De Ver. Sac. Script., III, 153

credere, sicut nec papa vel sua curia, cum nescit si illa persona cui concedit dictam indulgenciam sit dampnanda, sicut nec scit si sit voluntatis dei concedere quod ipse annuit sic in bullis."(1)

"....fateor quod indulgentiae papales, si ita se habeant ut dicuntur, sapiunt manifestam blasphemam. Dicit enim quod papa pretendit se habere potentiam ad salvandum singulos viatores", etc.(2)

"Sed ubi major blasphemia, quod ex nuda potestate Caesarea palliata, quae est legi Christi contraria, antichristus talem habeat potestatem?"(3)

The absolute injustices of such a system he points out by saying:

"Also yif this pardon be an heuenely giefte & gostly it schulde be geuen frely as Crist techith in the gospel, & not for money ne worldly goodis ne fleshly favour; but yif a riche man wol bie dere the bulle, he schal haue a bulle of pardon with thousand yeris though he be cursed of god for his synful lif, & a pore bedere man that hath no money and may not traueile to rome or to suche another place, he schal haue no pardon of the pope, though he be holy & ful of charitie," etc.(4)

His open condemnation of indulgences was not without risk to his own personal safety, as is evidenced in the prologue of the English Bible:

"But alas! alas! alas!... summe cristene lordis senden general lettris to alle her mynistris, and leegemen either tenauntis, that pardouns of bischopis of Rome, that ben opin leeingis, for thei graunten many c. yeris of pardoun aftir domes day, be prechid generally in her rewmes and lordischipis, and if any wijse man agenseith the opin errouris of antickrist, and teche men to do her almes to pore nedy men, to ascape the peynes of helle, and to winne the blisse of heuene, he be prisoned, as a man out of cristene bileue, and traytour of God, and of cristen kingis and lordis."(5)

The Trialogus also mentions plots which were made against his life.(6) With these dangers kept in mind, we must admire Wyclif

- (1) Dialogus, Cap. 13, 25
- (2) Trialogus, Cap. XXXII, 357
- (3) Ibid., Cap. XXXII, 358-359
- (4) Of Prelates, Cap. 13, Matt. Eng. Works, 82; cf. Op. Minor, 318
- (5) Forshall and Madden, "The Holy Bible in the Earliest English Version", Vol. I, Prologue, p. 30
- (6) Trialogus, Cap. IV, 255

all the more for his courage, intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual, in condemning this great error of his day.

Wyclif's logic deals deadly blows to the foundation of indulgences when he points out that Christ in all the gospels did not teach or use such a system; neither did Peter or Paul, or any of the disciples.(1) But perhaps the most embarrassing argument for his opponents was the one that the Pope was lacking in charity if any souls remained in purgatory, for it was supposedly in his hands to deliver them without cost to himself. To permit them to remain and suffer was due to a want of love on the part of the Pope. To confess the want of inclination to deliver these souls, Wyclif argues, must be to confess a gross want of charity; and to confess the want of power to deliver them must be to confess the hypocrisy which makes pretension to such power!(2) He shows how vain pilgrimages really are under such a system, for if the Pope can grant two thousand year pardons for certain prayers, a man might stay at home and by these orisons get forty thousand years respite from purgatory by noon!(3) In fact, pardon obtained by pilgrimages was nonsense to him, for Christ is everywhere in the world seeking to forgive sin.(4) (Curiously enough, he has nothing to say about the prevailing evil of pilgrimages by proxy.(5)) And what biting sarcasm he employs in his description of indulgence seals, which prelates used as a blind for a price placed upon pardons:

"Ypocrites seyn that thei taken
no thing for pardon but for the bulle that
is selid; certis a litel deed leed costith

(1) Of Prelates, op.cit., 80-81

(2) Ibid., 81-82

(3) Sermon XLVII, S.E.W., I, 137; also II, 302

(4) De Civ.Dom., III, 164; Matt.Eng.Wks., 7, 343-344

(5) Cf. Workman, II, 18; also II, 407-408

many thousand pond bi yere to oure pore lond,
sikire thei disceyuen the peple & iapen hem,
for thei sillen a faat goos for litel or nought,
but the garlek costith many shillyngis!" (1)

Against letters of fraternity Wyclif's wrath blazed with fury, first in English, then in Latin. To him it was a fraudulent buying and selling, and God must hate this hypocritical traffic.(2) The friars practice deceit and take every precaution that their fallacies should not be discovered. They may be condemned to hell, yet they endeavor to sell their own merit, thereby becoming parties to the condemnation of others. God will not turn from His course of justice to honor these frauds of the friars; these men have no merit, but are rank hypocrites (3), and the cause of much wavering in the faith.(4) Letters of fraternity or letters of indulgence are but license for further sin. The writings of the Pope's scribe cannot atone for sin -- in fact the Pope cannot grant indulgence any more than any other priest.(5) Clerical avarice was laid bare in the sale of these letters, which, as Gascoigne expressed it, made "the Church of Rome into a harlot, for she sells herself to whomsoever seeks her".(6)

Since penance was largely a disciplinary procedure in the Church, a word may be said here in regard to excommunication, although we are aware that it is not directly connected with the sacrament of penance, though there is a disciplinary relationship. Since Wyclif held no Hildebrandian ideas of the absolute power of the Church we are not surprised to find that

- (1) Of Prelates, Matt. Eng. Works, 82
- (2) Trialogus, IV, 349, 350; Forshall & Madden, I, Prologue, 30
- (3) Trialogus, IV, 352
- (4) Ibid., IV, 353
- (5) De Blasphemia, 10
- (6) Quoted from Workman, II, 16. We have not included S.E.W., III, 420-429, since authorship is doubtful. (Workman, I, 330)

he believed excommunication to be simply an advantageous tool employed by an entrenched and worldly papacy. It was pronounced upon both individuals and groups -- even extending to entire provinces and nations -- with the hope of enforcing a blind obedience by a veritable reign of terror. The individual excommunicated became exiled from home and friends, a fugitive from civil justice,-- presumably an outcast in the eyes of both God and man. The community or province which was under the ban was refused the rites of Christian burial for the dead, all Churches were closed, and all religious exercises and functions automatically ceased. Here again Wyclif shows his courage in daring to condemn such severity on the part of the Church, and he says:

"No mannes cursynge hath ony strengthe
but in as myche as God Himsilf cursith", (1) and

"..mannis curs harmeth nothing, ne
enterditynge, ne ony sensuris that Sathanas may feyne"(2)

Man should not stand in dread of the cursings of the bishops, but rather in the fear of God, that his own soul may be justified.(3) Some prelates more for the love of money than for sin -- even for a mere pittance of four pence or sixpence -- would hurl the curse, with the consequent damning of thousands of souls!(4)

"....et quia prelati sui praesumunt
propter pecuniam benedicere a Domino maledictis,
sicut maledicunt crebrius a Domino benedictis",etc.(5)

But all this excommunication is really invalid if not deserved (6), and curates knowing a sentence to be unjust should refuse

- (1) Of Dominion, Winn's Selections, 63
- (2) Church Temporalities, III, S. E. W., III, 218
- (3) Sermon CXCVIII, S.E.W., II, 159; also Matt.Eng.Wks., 277
- (4) Matthew's English Works, 36, 132, 146, 150
- (5) Trialogus, IV, VI, 264
- (6) De Blasphemia, 103-4; Matt.Eng.Wks., 34, 153, 454, 511

to execute the letters of excommunication.(1) The triple summons to repentance, given in Matthew's gospel, had been changed by the prelates into a triple summons for the payment of tithes! Such extortion does not in any way deserve the support of the ecclesiastical nor of the secular arm.(2)

Yet in spite of his opposition to this sacrament, Wyclif shows that he is characteristically a Schoolman by expressing the usual desire to be orthodox. He declares a willingness to submit to the Church's views of penance if shown conclusively that he is wrong.(3) This was a customary expression used by the Schoolmen when their opinions seemed anything like an innovation in the Church's teachings.

SUMMARY: We have seen that Wyclif did not accept penance as a sacrament in the strict sense of the term, and that he protested in many ways concerning the Church's views in respect to it, such as attrition becoming contrition, compulsory confession, the existence of purgatory, and the sale of indulgences with its fabricated treasury of merits. His anti-ecclesiastical, anti-hierarchical, anti-sacerdotal views rise to an extreme height in condemning the abuses so prevalent in his day. His insistence that confession of sin is to be made to God, without necessarily the mediation of a priest, is a bold assertion of the Protestant position of the immediacy of the individual's access to God for forgiveness; and his emphasis upon the sincere character of the recipient, so necessary for the sacrament to be efficacious -- an emphasis upon the subjective instead of the objective -- leads us to the inescapable conclusion that the Oxford Reformer was, for his day, a true Protestant.

(1) Matthew's English Works, 35, 250

(2) De Officio Regis, 169-176; De Blasphemia, 108

(3) De Eucharistia et Poenitentia, in De Euch., 343

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

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Before attempting a discussion of this sacrament, so treasured by the Church and so denounced by Wyclif, it may be well to point out difficulties which arise in considering it, which Harnack expresses thus:

"In connection with this Sacrament the general sacramental theory can be maintained, if at all, only by artifice, because the hierarchical interest created it, and introduced it into the sacramental system of grace simply with a view to self-glorification." (1)

The Church has never been exactly clear as to its full position in regard to this sacrament; the same may be said in the case of marriage.

This sacrament of orders is regarded as that which transfers the recipient across the wide interval, which, according to the hierarchical scheme, lies between the layman and the priest. It is that sacrament by which men are fitted to administer the other sacraments.(2) In it grace and spiritual power are conferred for the discharge of ecclesiastical offices, enabling the recipient to teach and command in the rightful discharge of his official duties in the Church.(3) And since it indicates what differentiates the clergy from the laity, it is a "sacramentum dignitatis", worthy of high honor and solemn regard.

Some fluidity of nomenclature is seen in the limited history of the sacrament, yet etymologically we may say that the words "order" and "ordination" are derived from the Latin "ordo"(4), "ordinare", "ordinatio", which were used to express

- (1) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 270
- (2) Aquinas, Summa, III, Supplem., Q.34, art.3
- (3) Catholic Encyclopedia, "Holy Orders", XI, 279
- (4) "Ordo" is used more in the sense of differentiating clergy from laity -e.g."ordo ecclesiasticus".

the Greek *χειροτόνειν*, *χειροτονία* and *καθιστάνειν κατάρταρις* -- meaning to appoint or set aside by show of hands. A later expression, however, came into use, *χειροθετεῖν*, to lay on hands, which custom has numerous references in the Scriptures (1), and is amply supported by the Fathers.(2)

Two features stand out pre-eminently in the history of orders: the Donatist controversy, and the rise of the powerful hierarchy, with its graduated scale of ecclesiastical offices culminating in the office of Pope. The first, in dealing with the validity of the sacraments administered by unworthy prelates, quite naturally included the problem of the efficacy of this sacrament of orders when administered by a heretical, unworthy bishop. Here the Church decided that such ordinations are indeed unpermitted, i.e. they are null and void as to their practical effects, yet are not invalid. In brief, they are "valida" but not "licita" -- but the Schoolmen could not always agree on this point.(3) By the time of the Middle Ages we find the Popes declaring entirely invalid the ordinations of bishops under disfavor and of rival Popes. Too often the decisions were matters of ecclesiastical expediency; at least the opinion prevailed that since ordination communicated an objective holiness, it gave the power also to propagate holiness.(4) The second feature, the rise of the powerful hierarchy, arose from the conception of the bishop as the key man of the ecclesiastical system. By the end of the fourth century the chief bishop of a province

(1) Acts 6:6; 13:3; I Tim.4:14; 5:22(?); II Tim.1:6

(2) See discussion in Catholic Encyclopedia, XI, 279

(3) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 271; Lombard, Sent. IV, Dist. 25; Aquinas, Summa, III, Supplem., Q. 38, art. 2

(4) Harnack, History of Dogma, V, 161; VI, 271; Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, III, 554-555

came to be known as a metropolitan or archbishop, and some degree of primacy was attached to this recognition, though his superiority was often challenged by other powerful bishops. Later came the patriarchate, an added dignity which came to the archbishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, with jurisdiction corresponding to the praefectures into which the empire was divided by Constantine. Since Rome was a prominent city, ruled over by a powerful ecclesiastical patriarch with twenty-eight provinces under his nominal authority -- the others had less -- and since its geographical location was one of isolation from other competing patriarchs, a primacy came to be attached to the patriarch of Rome which eventually resulted in his being called the spiritual ruler of the West, and finally the Pope. Thus slowly developed the ecclesiastical hierarchy, with its self-perpetuating cardinalate and papacy, which Wyclif was led to condemn so severely.

As to matter and form in orders much equivocation is seen to exist, for the Church has never clearly defined them in this sacrament. The Church maintains, by way of received opinion, that the imposition of hands is the sole matter of the sacrament, although some include as well the scholastic emphasis made upon the tradition of the instruments (symbols by which the hierarchical functions were represented), claiming for their authority the assertion of Eugene IV in the bull "Exultate"; while Aquinas asserts that the act of ordination is the material part of orders.(1) The form naturally varies since the matter is not definite, but consists of the words accompanying the matter,

(1) Aquinas, Summa, III, Supplem.,
Q. 34, art. 5

and in keeping with that which is prescribed by the Church. That which is now acceptable is "Receive power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate masses as well for the living as for the dead, in the name of the Lord. Amen."

The ordinary minister of the sacrament is the bishop, who alone has this power by virtue of his ordination and episcopal consecration; he makes the ordination both "valida" and "licita". The effects of the sacrament are an increase of sanctifying grace, a bestowal of sacramental grace which makes the recipient a fit and holy minister in the discharge of his office, and especially an imprinting of a "character indelebilis"(1), which in brief conveys the right to be a mediator between God and man.(2) This character can neither be effaced nor taken away; one in orders can never again become a layman.(3) Impediments to the receiving of orders were considered by Aquinas as being female sex, condition of slavery, guilt of manslaughter and illegitimate birth (4), but not all of these were regarded as strictly insuperable.

In considering Wyclif's interpretation of this sacrament of orders we must note that he employed the searching eye of the scholar in investigating the reasons for a wide interval existing between a self-contained and ambitious clergy and a timid, reactionary laity; and with sincere zeal he devoted his energies to the task of establishing a proper relationship between the priesthood and the common people. He conscientiously rebelled against the belief of his day that the Church was

- (1) Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 63, art. 2; Supplem. Q. 25, art. 2; Q. 37, art. 5; Harnack, Hist. of Dogma, VI, 271-272
- (2) Lombard, Sent. IV, Dist. 24, I
- (3) Council of Trent, Sess. XXIII, Doctrina de sacramento ordinis, Canon 4
- (4) Aquinas, Summa, III, Supplem. Q. 39

dependent for its existence upon the clergy, for in reality a Church without a body of believers is no Church. Its secret strength must lie in the faith of individuals who are in daily companionship with Christ. The hierarchical system, with its attempted monopoly of dispensing all the outward means of grace, was to Wyclif an intolerable system -- even the work of Anti-christ.

The Oxford Reformer defines order as:

"....ordo vocatur potestas data clerico a Deo ministerio episcopi ad debite ecclesiae ministrandum." (1)

The doctrine and practice of his day is further described in the following words:

"Et ille ordo datur communiter in justo tempore cum solemni jejunio cum missis et aliis ritibus, qui istud spirituale ministerium ecclesiae solemniset. Unde dicitur communiter quod non datur ordo clerico, nisi quando episcopus dat sibi Spiritum Sanctum, et imprimit in mentem suam characterem, et ille est tantum indelebilis quod licet clericus degradetur vel quodcunque sibi eveniat, character inseparabiliter reservatur." (2)

We need to note, however, the caution with which Wyclif approaches the problem of the indelibility of the character in orders, for he prefaces his remarks with the guarded words "it is commonly said"(3), showing that he is giving more the accepted opinion of his day than his own personal view. The somewhat mysterious passage on the "quiddity" of the sacrament of orders which follows the above quotation shows that confused opinions and doubts were already being entertained by some in regard to the indelibility of the priestly character. As Vaughan has clearly shown,

(1) Trialogus, IV, XV, 295

(2) Ibid., IV, XV, 295-296

(3) "Dicitur communiter" - Trialogus, IV, XV, 296; this caution occurs again in De Ecclesia, XXI, 511, 515 etc.

this power conferred by the authority of prelates need not necessarily have a connection with that which the true priest receives from the unseen Bishop of souls. Even though the established forms of ordination were acknowledged, the character said to be conveyed by them was regarded as a subject for debate.(1) Was Wyclif one of these doubting individuals? We believe that he was, as we shall try to point out in the succeeding pages -- yet we realize fully that our opinion in this connection must come more from deduction than from the Reformer's expressed statements.

In his frank examination of orders Wyclif established at least three definite propositions; the universal priesthood of believers, as opposed to the false accentuation of the clerico-laity distinction; the identity of bishops and presbyters, which really involved the New Testament acceptance of but two orders, those of priest and deacon; and last, the fallibility of the Pope in a man-made system, and the consequent limitation of the Church's commonly accepted prerogatives. Since this sacrament is intimately connected with the general conception of the Church, we need to have some understanding of Wyclif's conception of the Church in order to interpret correctly his position in regard to holy orders, and especially to understand in its fullness the first of these three great propositions, namely, the priesthood of believers.

The Church was to Wyclif primarily a spiritual body, a special communion of the elect.(2) This concept necessarily

(1) Vaughan, Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe, II, 309

(2) De Ecclesia, I, 1-2, 5; Sermones, IV, Sermo V, 42; De Civili Dominio, I, xliii

clashed with the facts, opinions and methods of a materialistic hierarchy, which sought daily to advance the Church in temporal power to the neglect of the spiritual. It was Wyclif's predestinarianism which led him to the conviction that the essence of true religion is individualistic, rather than hierarchical or even social. God predestined many to righteousness and salvation (the "praedestinati"); others were foreknown to judgment and eternal punishment (the "praesciti"), cut off as limbs from the body of the Church.(1) The predestined were individuals dependent solely upon God, and without the need of any priestly mediation for their righteousness and salvation.

However, the universal conception of medieval piety was that the mediation of the priest was absolutely essential for salvation. Medieval Christians held that the supernatural life of the soul was created, nourished and perfected through the sacraments, and that the priests who administered these means of grace, in virtue of their ordination, possessed miraculous powers. Virtually the whole of Europe was enslaved with this idea that the priesthood barred the way to God (2); only by the mediation of the clergy could one of the faithful gain access to the Father. It was to overcome this prevailing idea, and also to undermine the concept that the Church and the clergy are one, that Wyclif dared to write:

"Whanne men speken of holy Chirche, thei understonden anoon prelati and prestis, monkis and chanouns, and freris, and alle men that han crownes, though thei lyven nevere so cursedly agenst Goddis

- (1) De Ecclesia, 12. Wyclif does not speak of the "reprobate" as Calvin and some of the later reformers used the term-- though see Lechler, 290 & n.1; 292n1.
 (2) Lindsay, History of the Reformation, I, 438-448

lawe, -- and clepen not ne holden secularis men of holy Chirche, though thei lyven nevere so trewely after Goddis lawe, and enden in perfect charitie. But nethelless alle that schullen be savyd in blisse of hevene ben membris of holy Chirche, and ne moo." (1)

With this conception of the Church as a spiritual body, considered wholly apart from the clergy, though they may or may not be numbered in it, Wyclif moved to a position of maintaining the individual's independence from priestly mediation. He recognized the free and immediate access of believers to the grace of God in Christ, and thus came to accept the great doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers, although he never actually employs the phrase.(2) But in several passages he does speak of lay individuals as being priests:

"Ymmo videtur iuxta testimonium Augustini, Crisostomi et aliorum sanctorum quod omnis predestinatus laycus est sacerdos", etc. (3)

"Eche man that schul be saved is a real prest mad of God, as holy writ and holy doctours witnessen pleyndly. Thanne eche lewed man that schul be saved, is a real prest maad of God, and eche man is bounden to be suche a verri prest." (4)

"Omnes sancti viri et femine membra Christi sunt sacerdotes." (5)

And in his New Testament translation of vital passages in this connection, Wyclif definitely used the word "priest", showing that he was true to the Biblical message:

"And ye silf as quyk stoonys be ye aboue bildid in to spiritual housis, and an hooli preest-
hod to offre spiritual sacrifices acceptable to
God bi Jhesu Crist." (6)

(1) Octo in Quibus Seduntur Simples Christiani, S. E. W., III, 447

(2) See Lechler's valuable discussion, 289-290; 309 (note)

(3) De Eucharistia, IV, 98

(4) Quoted from Forshall and Madden, The Holy Bible, etc. Vol. I, xv-taken from Arundel Ms. 254, collated with Harl. 6333

(5) De Potestate Papae, Cap. XI, 312; also 315

(6) I Peter 2:5, in Forshall and Madden, Vol. IV, 607

"But ye ben a chosun kyn, a kyngli preest-
hood, hooli folc, a puple of purchasing", etc.(1)

"....which louyde us and waischide us fro
oure synnes in his blood, and made us a kyngdom,
and prestis to God and to his fader", etc. (2)

And it may throw some additional light on Wyclif's position to learn that the Reformer's faithful disciple and assistant, John Purvey, openly said,

"Et sic omnes praedestinos facit Deus sacerdotes."(3)

So firmly convinced is Wyclif of this great truth that he admits the possibility of the Church continuing for a time wholly apart from the clergy, and maintained only by the laity. He uses the figure of the Church as a ship ("navis Petri") safely manned and brought to port by lay members alone.(4)

It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the importance of this point in Wyclif's thinking, for here we see that the center of gravity of the Church is shifted from earth to heaven. It is a direct application of the Reformer's theory of "dominion" to the individual conscience of man, and declares that whatever measure of obedience each Christian might render to king or priest, he nevertheless possesses God-given dominion, and the throne of God Himself is the tribunal of personal appeal. There is more in this argument than a little, for it obviously asserts man's direct relation to God, and his unfettered liberty of personal and immediate approach to Him. If it does not assert, it plainly implies the entire absence of the necessity of priestly or other mediation, and thus sweeps away the basis upon which

- (1) I Peter 2:9- in Forshall and Madden, IV, 607
- (2) Rev. 1:5,6 - in Forshall and Madden, IV, 641
- (3) Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 387
- (4) De Civili Dominio, I, Cap. XLIII, 392

the Church of the Middle Ages was built. God's counsel is to be sought rather than that of a worldly priest. Wyclif was too strong an advocate of individualism -- in spite of his subtle philosophical conclusions (1)-- to conclude that the welfare and continuity of the Church must rest with any distinct order of men. Too great a gulf had already been fixed between the clergy and the laity, and this chasm Wyclif sought to bridge with his New Testament conviction that man needs no human mediator between himself and his Maker. The tremendous importance of this changed conception, with its subsequent influence, is acknowledged by a prominent Roman Catholic authority when he says:

"Wyclif at Oxford and John Huss at Prague, who stood in front of a doctrinal agitation, undermined the very principle of ecclesiastical authority. They desired nothing but the direct and mystical relations uniting the faithful to Christ, without the intervention of the existing hierarchy. In their theories we detect the first rumblings of the Reform." (2)

In this shifting of emphasis from earth to heaven the Reformer declared the individual's responsibility in spiritual things, making each person of faith a king and priest unto God.(3)

While he nowhere used the primitive Christian phrase "the priesthood of believers", he asserted the duty of the faithful to assume an individual responsibility, even to rebuke an unworthy priest, and if necessary to judge and depose him. In this connection he quoted the authority of Pope Gregory VII, that congregations were to refuse the ministry of some priests -- e.g. of a married one.(4)

(1) See Workman's excellent discussion, John Wyclif, I, 140-142

(2) M.DeWulf, History of Medieval Philosophy, II, 161-162

(3) De Ecclesia, 77 f.

(4) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, III, 6-7, 13.

Wyclif's individualism, which led the Reformer theologically to maintain the New Testament and Protestant doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers, and practically to establish the system of "poor priests", brought him to a consideration of the stamp of approval necessary for those who went forth to preach the Word of God. In his opinion this stamp of approval, or priestly character, came not from the hands of the hierarchy of the Church, but from the direct appointment and call of God. He admitted that many of the clergy of his own day belonged to the "elect", and they gladly and faithfully discharged their duties in spiritual things. But he also pointed out that they do so not because they have been set aside by the Church through the sacrament of orders to have a part in an apostolic succession, but because they are called of God as ministering servants, and are ordained by Him. The sufficiency of a divine call, apart from any ordination or installation by a bishop, is convincingly set forth in the following passage from a Latin sermon:

"Videtur ergo, quod ad esse talis ministerii ecclesiae requiritur auctoritas acceptationis divinae, et per consequens potestas ac notitia data a Deo ad tale ministerium peragendum, quibus habitis licet episcopus secundum traditiones suas non imposuit illi manus, Deus per se instituit."(1)

And again, in his direct style in Middle English, Wyclif states:

"Croune and cloth maken no prest, ne the Emperours bischop with his wordis, but power that Crist gyveth." (2)

He looked upon those whom he sent forth, regardless of their training, as men worthy to proclaim the gospel message. In a

(1) Sermons for Saints' Days, No.8, fol.17, col.1--
quoted from Lechler, 196

(2) De Papa, Winn's Wyclif's Selections, 3;
Matthew's English Works, 467

Latin tract, "De Graduationibus Scholasticis"(1), the Reformer gives an emphatic defense of itinerant preachers, proving that the preaching of the gospel by men who are not graduates is justified by the Scriptures, and allowed by the early Church. He also shows clearly that the recognized clergy were often poor in scholarly attainment, neglecting the preaching of the Word, and entitled to be called "dumb dogs". And he is willing to acknowledge that an unlettered man with God's grace can do more for building up the Church than many graduates.(2) He never discourages the pursuit of truth or the virtue of learning as such, but he does claim that those with grace in the heart and the fire of the Divine Spirit on the lips can often be more effective than those who have the hall-mark of the universities.

Wyclif's extended arguments in favor of lay preaching might lead us to believe that his itinerant evangelists were men who had not received orders, and that the Reformer was trying to justify their existence. To some extent this may be true, especially of those sent out in the closing years of Wyclif's life--yet these evangelists were definitely called "poor priests" at first, showing that they were members of the clergy, and qualified to administer the sacraments. They later were called "poor preachers", and much condemnation of them came from the hierarchy because these evangelists were without episcopal sanction, yet a few of them were also in priests' orders -- e.g. William Thorpe.(3) But Wyclif's main concern was that the message and

(1) Lechler accepts this tract as a genuine writing of Wyclif-- see Lechler, John Wycliffe, 199, note 7

(2) Dialogus, 54; Opus Minor, 322-323; De Blasphemia, 243

(3) See Lechler, John Wycliffe, 194-195; Vaughan, John de Wycliffe, A Monograph, 275 (1853); and a full discussion of the "poor preachers" is given in Workman, II, 201-220

example of Christ should be given to the people by sincere men, whether in or out of ecclesiastical orders. The source of every true ordination, in the Reformer's opinion, was certainly not from men of the lordly hierarchy, but from God. This is seen in a scholastic passage concerning the matter and form of the sacrament:

"Sed dicitur ut supra, quod de maturiori materia debet esse ordinantis eleccio et deficiente omnino aptitudine materie ordinacio clerici debet deficere, quia certum est, quod nullus episcopus ordinat clericum, nisi prius Deus ordinet.

Nec potest Deus inducere formam huiusmodi, nisi prius saltem naturaliter materia disponatur. Ideo a primo, nullus ordinat sacerdotem, nisi Deus prius ipsum habilitet." (1)

In all fairness it must be admitted that Wyclif at one time did recognize that the true priest possessed the power of the keys. At one period in his progressive thinking he wrote:

"Nam nullus catholicus negabit quin potestas clavium sit tradita sacerdoti", etc. (2)

But he later could not logically refrain from the conclusion, based on his theory of dominion, that a "trew man", layman though he is, stands higher before God than a parish priest, or a bishop, or even the Pope, if these of priestly consecration and hierarchical order are Christians and priests merely in name, while in reality they are enemies of the Church, and limbs in the body of the wicked fiend, Satan. This view, of course, is consistent with his position that dominion depends upon grace and holiness. No prelate is worthy of honor unless his professed life is supported by his deeds -- and the true priests of God are bound by their profession to follow Christ more faithfully

(1) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, Vol. II, 253

(2) De Dominio Divino, Cap. II, 9

than the laity; otherwise they are not priests.(1) Those openly wicked in the sight of men should certainly be deposed.(2) How pointedly he rejects his early belief in the power of the keys as being centered in the Church as an organization he shows by saying:

"And thes keies hadde Petre with many other seintis, for alle men that comen to hevене have thes keies of God." (3)

"Sed nimis blasphemum foret dicere quod deus non potest vel nunquam dat gratiam, nisi mediante tali ministerio sacerdotis; ergo eque blasphemum est dicere quod nullus peccator potest salvari sine tali confessione facta sacerdote." (4)

"Crist sente these disciplis to preche comunly to the peple, withouten lettre or axinge of leve of Seint Petir..... For fro the time that he (Paul) was convertid, three yeer after, he preechide fast, and axide noo leve of Petir herto, for he hadde leve of Jesus Crist." (5)

Surely this is strong support for the belief that the Reformer held that the divine stamp of approval in ordination came directly from God, and not from the Church through any theory of apostolic succession by way of the sacrament of orders!

The Oxford professor further doubted the sacrament of orders as interpreted by the Church because to him it was a man-made means of grace whereby the ecclesiastics sought to retain their worldly power. Special laws had to be established in the Church to perpetuate a system which was not in keeping with the New Testament, or with the earliest practices of the Christian Church. Concerning this sacrament of human invention he says:

"But it is drede now that prestis kepen dritt and vanite, and to this is her entent; and

(1) De Ver. Sac. Script., III, 165; De Ecclesia, 43, 55, 129

(2) De Ecclesia, 55

(3) Arnold, S.E.W., I, 349, Sermon C.

(4) De Blasphemia, 138

(5) Arnold, S.E.W., I, 176, Sermon lviii

herto thei shapen lawis. For the lawe that Crist hath govun, and the chesinge that he hath chosen, were ynowgh to governe his Chirche withouten lawis now maad. And office for to preche the gospel, with few other sacramentis, weren service light and ynowgh to siche preestis for to kepe; and this diden Petre and Poule and other apostlis everychon.... And not al oonlie siche preestis have keping of Cristis Chirche, but kingis and princis of this world as Ysidere berith witnesse."(1)

This last statement, which in reality is a restating of the position of Isidore, bishop of Seville (2), is a strong condemnation of the ecclesiastical opinion that the clergy alone keep the Church; and from the above quotation we may easily infer that each individual has a responsibility before God, which is the foundation of the great doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers. Wyclif further shows that the ecclesiastics held that Christ's own ordination was not valid, but held in contempt by certain laws of the Church:

"Paucos ergo vel nullos inducunt ad pacem vel caritatem secundum regulas fidei adimplendas, sed pro bono proprio laborant anxie, ac ac si ordinationem Christi vellent subvertere."(3)

"Unde antichristi discipuli hic videntur innuere, quod Cristis ordinatio non fuit valida neque prudens, sed oportet ultra ordinationem Cristis vel legem dominaciones terrificas commisceri. Et hinc oportet prelatos ecclesie ultra hoc, quod Cristus preceperat, seculariter dominari, et per consequens modo lex Cristis contempnitur et lex antichristi, quem David vocat legislatorem, ab infidelibus exaltatur."(4)

The very fact that Wyclif entertained many doubts as to the method and legitimacy of ordination of his day may be to some a step in the proof that the sacrament of orders did not always confer a "character indelebilis", nor was it necessarily confined to a select few. He definitely held that:

- (1) Sermon LXXIX, Select English Works, I, 265
- (2) Sententiae, Liber III, Caput li
- (3) De Quattuor Sectis Novellis, Polemical Works, I, 255
- (4) De Citationibus Frivolis, Polemical Works, II, 560

"....proude prestis & coueytous ben suspect of prestis staat." (1)

In his *De Ecclesia* he openly expresses doubt concerning orders:

"Sic enim facta apostolorum ostenderant se esse sacerdotes licet nesciamus quando et qua forma fuerint a domino ordinati.

Confirmatur, si ordinans vel ordinatus vel uterque fuerit pro tempore ordinacionis simpliciter infidelis, aut ordinanti deest intencio cum verbis sacramenti ordinis que profert, tunc cum paribus non fit ordinacio legitima, sed hoc ex tibi dubio contigit de quocunque sacerdote cui debes testimonium prohibere; ergo ex tibi dubio non fuit legitime ordinatus. Assumptum videtur eo quod nemo accipit baptismum quod est sacramentum necessariissimum sine fide, ergo a pari nec alia minus necessaria sacramenta, et per idem videtur quod omnino infidelis non ministrat fidelibus sacramenta." (2)

And then continuing, in support of his doubts, Wyclif quotes the words of Pope Gregory, using, as is so often his custom, the testimony of the orthodox to support views which the Church later branded as heretical or erroneous:

"Quicunque sacros ordines vendunt aut emunt sacerdotes esse non possunt." (3)

And in a Latin tract which Workman assigns as the Reformer's last writing Wyclif says that there is good reason for the silence of the Holy Spirit in matters of how, when, and by what form Christ ordained the apostles, the reason being to show the indifferency of all forms of words.(4)

One of the most conclusive bits of evidence as to the Reformer's doubts of orders is a statement made in the *Triologus*, when in speaking of the heresy of transubstantiation being introduced into the Church, he says:

- (1) De Papa, Matthew's English Works, 479
- (2) De Ecclesia, 455; also cf. De Blasphemia, 125-127
- (3) Decr. sec. pars, Causa I, q. 1, Cap. XII
- (4) De Quattuor Sectis Novellis, Polemical Works, I, 259

".....cujus causa est quod prelati ecclesiae non secundum ordinationem Christi praeferuntur." (1)

We must note with care that Wyclif nowhere denies the proper function and necessity of a clergy who are spiritually minded, and who are qualified to teach, exhort, lead and inspire the laity. He always held in high esteem the sacred office of priest, realizing that Christ had set apart men to do His will:

"Christus aliqua confirmavit explicite et verbo multiplici, sicut officia sacerdotum,"etc. (2)

"Concedo ergo quod status sacerdotii est status ministerii et perfectus, expresse fundabilis in scriptura." (3)

But from actual experience Wyclif knew that many of the prelates were not Christ-like men, and he concludes that those of the clergy who are not spiritually sincere, the "foreknown" (*prae-sciti*), are in the Church but not of it.(4) In some strange way they have the stamp of ordination, but in a different manner from those of the elect (*praedestinati*); it is but the mark of the Beast.(5) They may administer sacraments to others, but to their own damnation (6) -- a position which he doubted in later life.(7) Thus we see that the Reformer maintained that the "character indelebilis" was not always the same in ordination, since much depended upon the spiritual condition of the recipient.

It is with scholastic shrewdness that he discusses the problem of whether ordination has any effect if the bishop should be interrupted before finishing the words of the commission (8),

- (1) Trialogus, IV, VII, 268
- (2) Supplementum Trialogi, Cap.VI, 438 in Trialogus
- (3) Sermones, III, 313; see also De Officio Regis, 143, 197, 260; and De Ecclesia, 88, 467, 562
- (4) De Ecclesia, 89; Sermones, II, 399
- (5) De Ecclesia, 445
- (6) Ibid., 442, 448
- (7) Sermones, III, 47
- (8) De Ecclesia, XXI, 515

for the common opinion prevailed that no priestly character was imprinted until the words were complete. Wyclif's conclusion is that we do not know when nor how God imprints the priestly character. This takes the matter completely out of the bishop's hands, and makes ordination dependent upon God alone.

"Certis believe nedith us to seye that Crist
mut make thes prestis other bi wordis hid to us or bi
grace with-oute wordis." (1)

No human agent was absolutely necessary, since bishops cannot ordain unless God has previously ordained. In taking this sacrament from human hands Wyclif practically dealt a death blow to the established doctrine of the Church that it is reserved for bishops to ordain.(2) But the final proof of Wyclif's doubts of the indelibility of this priestly character is seen when he definitely opposes the Church's view that a priest can never again become a layman, by recommending that priests engaged in secular work should renounce holy orders and become laymen.(3) So confirmed in this conviction is he that he holds all worldly prelates would be better off as laymen, since they would then incur a lesser damnation.(4) Thus whatever conception he had of a priestly character conferred in ordination, he certainly did not hold it to be one imprinted indelibly upon the mind and the soul through any "ex opere operato" working of the sacrament.

Another great proposition which the Reformer put

- (1) De Papa, Matthew's English Works, 479; 467;
De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, II, 253
- (2) Wyclif's opinions cannot altogether be judged by the views of his followers, yet a faithful disciple, John Purvey, held that God ordained "sine operatione humana ... sine sacramentis, sive characteribus". (Fasc. Zizan. 387) We believe that he was probably following his master in this respect.
- (3) De Blasphemia, XVII, 263-4; Sermones, II, 372-3
- (4) Sermones, II, Sermo XXVI, 194

forward to the detriment of the Roman view of the sacrament of orders was that the bishop and the presbyter are really one.(1) It has indeed been argued by Canon Pennington (2) that one dare not make the hasty conclusion that Wyclif was unalterably opposed to episcopacy. He (Pennington) points out in one isolated passage (3) in an early work that there is some recognition of a clerical gradation, which must involve superiority of powers, and therefore such belief opens the way for the episcopal system. But unquestionably the Reformer moved to a more definite position later in life concerning the true identity of bishop and presbyter, and the bulk of evidence from Wyclif's maturer writings is overwhelmingly against Pennington's position. To reach any other conclusion is to do great injustice to the later statements of the Reformer.(4)

In advancing this view that bishop and presbyter are one, Wyclif completely disregards the idea of strict episcopacy, and maintains that all episcopal gradations of the clerical office should be discarded except two -- the New Testament orders of priest and deacon.(5) The foundation of a man-made system was too faulty for him, for he chose to base his belief on New Testament truth, even pointing out that the orthodox father, Jerome (6), held this view, and not only Jerome, but Hilary, Chrysostom, Theodore, Theodoret, and many others. Wyclif's emphatic declaration of such a position cannot be doubted when we

(1) De Ver.Sac.Script., II, 181; Trialogus, IV, XV, 296, 438

(2) Pennington, A.R., John Wyclif, etc., 265-267

(3) Polemical Works, I, Cap. IV, 101

(4) Cf. discussion of Bishop Wordsworth in Address, 27; also Dyson Hague, 150 f.

(5) Sermones, II, Sermo LX, 401; De Ecclesia, 515; De Blasphemia, 257; De Pot. Pap., 315

(6) Trialogus, IV, XV, 296; De Blasphemia, 66-67; cf. Lechler's valuable discussion, 311 (and note); also Hague, 151-152

hear him say:

"Sed unum audacter assero, quod in primitiva ecclesia ut tempore Pauli suffecerunt duo ordines clericorum, scilicet sacerdos atque diaconus. Secundo dico quod tempore apostoli fuit idem presbyter atque episcopus; patet I Timoth. III et ad Titum I." (1)

And again in one of his English passages he says:

"By ordynaunce of Crist prestis and bishops was al one, bot effter the emperoure departid hom, and made bishops lordis and prestis hor servauntis; and this was cause of envye, and quenchid myche charitie." (2)

He again emphasizes that the priesthood and the diaconate are sufficient (3), showing that in the history of the Church authority has been usurped:

"And thus it is of cardinalis, of erchebischopis, and of bishopis, of erchedekenes, and of officialis, and othir servauntis that ben newe foundun. Alle these ben to charge of the Chirche, and fruyt of hem is moche synne. Preestis and dekenes weren ynowgh, if thei wolden mekeli doen her office, and holde hem apaied with Cristis povertie; but Cristis lawe is al reversid." (4)

It is totally unnecessary to Wyclif to have any distinction between bishops and presbyters, for a bishop cannot have any spiritual powers above those of the priest. He believed fully in the parity of the clergy (5), accepting Jerome's famous dictum "...among the ancients bishops and presbyters are the same, for the one is a term of dignity, the other of age." (6) Any priest, if rightly ordained, can administer all of the sacraments (7) -- hence there is no room for any so-called

- (1) Trialogus, IV, XV, 296
- (2) On the Seven Deadly Sins, S. E. W., III, 131
- (3) De Blasphemia, XVII, 257; Sermones, I, 401
- (4) Of Mynystres in the Chirche - S. E. W., II, 421
- (5) De Potestate Papae, V, 95
- (6) Preserved in Corpus Juris Canonici-- Decreti, I, Distinct. 95, c. 5
- (7) Trialogus, IV, X, 280-281; see Workman's discussion, II, 13 (notes)

episcopal functions, such as confirmation and ordination.(1)
 Ordination by a presbyter or a priest is sufficient.(2) He
 points out that usurped clerical functions retard the Church
 of Christ -- they act as stumbling blocks, and lead men to seek
 worldly gain.

"Ita quod omnes operationes concernentes
 sacerdotes cesarios, in quantum tales non profici-
 unt directe ad beatitudinem sed impediunt vel re-
 tardant. Et ita est de tribus dignitatibus sive
 officiis que episcopus sibi servat, que juvenum
 confirmacio, clericorum ordinacio et locorum con-
 secracio. Omnia enim ista sonant in cupidinem vel
 lucri temporalium vel honoris." (3)

Wyclif's relentless logic led him late in life to
 condemn orders almost to the point of extermination in his own
 thinking, for by the undermining of the basic principles of this
 sacrament, supposedly reserved for bishops, the whole sacerdotal
 system must logically fall like a house of cards. In the Tria-
 logus Wyclif maintained that every predestinated man was a
 priest unto God, and every priest divinely ordained can confer
 all the sacraments of the Church as well as the Pope.(4) Thus
 in such a system, based as it was upon both the New Testament
 and his knowledge of the early history of the Church, the bish-
 op had no rights or prerogatives whatsoever that the priest did
 not already possess. With true insight Wyclif asks, if a layman
 can in cases of necessity confer grace in baptism, why should
 there be any limiting of confirmation to bishops alone.(5)

It is interesting to note Wyclif's erroneous thinking

- (1) Trialogus, IV, XV, 297-298
- (2) De Potestate Papae, XI, 314
- (3) Dialogus, Capitulum 24m, 50
- (4) Trialogus, IV, X, 280-281
- (5) Ibid., IV, XV, 296; Supplem. Trial., VI, 438;
 S. E. W., III, 131, 285-286

as to the historical development of hierarchical power. He accepted the general belief of his day that the original equality of presbyter and bishop changed with the grant of Constantine the Great, when this emperor endowed the bishop of Rome, Silvester I, with powers both temporal and spiritual.(1) As a consequence the bishops, not only in Rome but throughout the Church universal, were elevated above the presbyters, and from this elevation eventually grew the graduated hierarchy which culminated in the papal primacy. But the introduction of such an hierarchy was not advantageous to the Church, in Wyclif's opinion. Usurpation of certain offices followed, as the bishops claimed for themselves the authority of confirmation, ordination, the blessing of the oil of unction, dedication and consecration of Churches, etc.-- all of which Christ tolerated in heaven. But the Savior's example on earth was foreign to all this -- He blessed no oil of unction, dedicated no buildings. Wyclif points out that the only example in Scripture of this last prerogative is the dedication of the Temple by Solomon -- and he was neither priest nor bishop! The Church of Christ finds itself in difficulty because of such unscriptural customs which have been introduced.(2) All in all the Church would be far better off without a clerical hierarchy:

"Sed ex fide cognoscimus quod crevit Christi ecclesia a tempore ascensionis Domini usque ad Silvestrum sine prelatibus huiusmodi longe amplius quam post crevit; et experimento cognovimus quod mortuo papa vel deposito cum suis cardinalibus non minus sed amplius prosperatur ecclesia." (3)

So completely did Wyclif succeed in breaking down the

- (1) De Pot. Papae, X, 227; Opus Minor, 226
- (2) Opus Evangelium, III, 49
- (3) Ibid., III, 48

distinction between bishop and presbyter, making them one, that his disciples went one step further in the abolition of orders, and granted the power of confirmation, hitherto an episcopal prerogative, to both priests and laymen alike. Wyclif himself never went quite this far, although he seems to have granted the laity the privileges of administration in baptism (1) and the Eucharist (2) in extreme cases, and he raises the question as to confirmation, as we have seen. This shows that his trend was toward the abolition of orders altogether, though he never actually reached this stage in his revolt. He did assert, however, that for the bishops to claim that the power to transmit or bestow the Holy Spirit was one reserved to them alone, constituted an arrogance of the worst kind, and was nothing short of blasphemy.(3) No indelible character or grace is conferred by them in ordination, for God alone ordains. Only the "predestined" bear the approved stamp of God; the "foreknown" have a stamp, but not of approval; it is the mark of the Beast.(4)

And concerning the third proposition, that the Pope was fallible in such a man-made system, which must involve consequent limitations of the Church's commonly accepted prerogatives, Wyclif has a great deal to say. We are aware that this is not as directly connected with the sacrament as are the other two propositions, yet there is a connection since his rejection of the hierarchy helps to emphasize his acceptance of but two clerical offices -- presbyterate and diaconate. Since Wyclif discusses this proposition in connection with orders (5), we feel a certain

(1) Trialogus, IV, XV, 296; Supplem. Trial., VI, 438

(2) Trialogus, IV, X, 280

(3) Ibid., IV, XIV, 293

(4) De Ecclesia, 444-445

(5) Trialogus, IV, XV, 296-298

justification for doing so here. Space cannot permit a full treatment of the claims brought forward in his Latin work "De Potestate Papae", through which runs a growing undercurrent of doubt as to the whole system of the papacy; nor can we adequately deal with the briefer English work "De Papa". We have already seen that his break with the papacy was a developing process, growing from a faithful acceptance of the papal claims to that of toleration; from toleration to doubt; and from doubt to open antagonism and complete revolt. From the writings of this evolutionary period, of course, may be drawn any kind of statement showing that Wyclif accepted in full, or rejected completely the papacy, as the case may be. Gregory's publication of bulls against him in 1377 simply added fuel to the fires of doubt already kindled at Bruges, and which continued to burn in the heart of Wyclif, leading him at last to a position of fierce denunciation of all papal claims, whether they came from Rome or Avignon. His tirade is launched both against the Pope as an individual, and against the papacy as a system.

"Ideo si essent centum papae, et omnes fratres essent versi in cardinales, non deberet credi sententiae suae in materia fidei, nisi de quanto se fundaverint in scriptura." (1)

He admits that the Church needs a Head, but that Head is not the Pope, but Christ, (2) who "dwellith euere heed of hooly chirche" (3).

"Quod ecclesia servans fidem Cristi non est acephala, cum habeat Cristam caput, et Cristus est per se sufficiens." (4)

And as it was expedient for Christ to leave His disciples, so

(1) Trialogus, IV, VII, 266

(2) De Apostasia, 201; De Blasphemia, 47-48; De Ecclesia, 26-28; Sermones, IV, 2, 44; Ye Chirche and Hir Membris, Cap. II

(3) De Papa, Matt. Eng. Works, 479

(4) Polemical Works, I, 257

ought there to be no visible Head of the Church on earth, for the Pope is an occasion of schism.(1) If in any sense the Pope is to be called the head of the Church, he is to be recognized, as Melancthon later pointed out, only "jure humano", not "jure divino". He can never be certain that he is a member of the true Church:

"For no pope that now lyveth woot where he be of the Chirche, or where he be a lym of the fend, to be dampned with Lucifer." (2)

As early as 1378 Wyclif began to make folly of the opinion that a belief in the Pope as head of the Church was essential for salvation, when it was pretended ".... esse de necessitate salutis credendum, quod papa quincunque sit capud universalis ecclesie", etc.(3) A wicked pope is the worst of hypocrites, and is worse than the devil! (4)

Wyclif argues that the so-called primacy of the Pope at Rome (to him the Antichrist (5)) was based on three false grounds: first, because Peter died at Rome, and Constantine was emperor there -- to which claim he replies that even the Moham-
medan prelate in Jerusalem could hold a better claim to the primacy in Christendom than this.(6) Second, the claim that the Pope is elected by the college of cardinals, who are important bishops and leaders in the Church, and therefore the whole Church ought to accept the Pope as head -- to which the reply is given that the apostles truly elected Matthias, who was in no way recognized as the head.(7) The system of electing a Pope is branded as a pagan or heathen rite.(8) Third, because of

(1) De Blasphemia, 48

(2) Of the Chirche and Hir Members, S. E. W., III, 339

(3) De Ver. Sac. Script., II, Cap. XX, 135

(4) De Potestate Papae, 330-331

(5) De Pot. Pap., 328; Opus Evang., 106 f; Serm. IV, 195

(6) Sermones, II, Sermo LVIII, 433

(7) Ibid., II, Sermo LVIII, 434

(8) De Apostasia, 202

Christ's charge to Peter concerning loosing and binding -- to which Wyclif replies that the charge was made to Peter, and not to the Roman pontiffs, and consequently it has no bearing whatsoever upon the papacy.(1) Having thus examined the foundation upon which the primacy of the Pope rests, there is little wonder that Wyclif rejects all such claims, declaring them to be false and untenable.

As to authority the Pope is inferior to the King in all respects:

"One thing I dare boldly to assert, that the pope cannot be greater than the kaiser either in that which pertains to the world or that which pertains to God." (2)

It is not necessary to obey papal bulls.(3) Having thus limited the Pope's authority, Wyclif goes on to limit his ability, claiming that the Pope is not infallible, but peccable (4), and subject to temporal lords (5). No man is above reproof (6), for even Popes and cardinals may err; ("Papa errare potest; sacra scriptura errare non potest"(7)) and in case the Pope is a worldly person, he should be deprived of his dignified position in the Church.(8) The Reformer does not hesitate to say that the Pope's reign is the reign of Antichrist in the world (9); that the Pope is diametrically opposed to Christ in every way. Christ was humble, the Pope is proud; Christ was poor, the Pope is rich; Christ approved only the truth, the Pope approves falsity. It is easy to see that the One was sociable and familiar, the other

(1) Sermones, II, Sermo LVIII, 434

(2) De Officio Regis, 84, 143

(3) Sermones, I, 384

(4) Pol. Wks., I, 35; De Civilio Dominio, II, 114; De Blasphemia contra Fratres, Pars I, Sel. Eng. Wks., 407; Ye Chirche and Hir Membris, Winn's Sel., 123-6

(5) De Civ. Dom., II, 116-118; De Blasphemia, 63

(6) De Civ. Dom., II, 120

(7) Dialogus, 843

(8) De Civ. Dom., IV, 398

(9) De Blasphemia, 68; Dialogus, 73

shuts himself up in a castle as a recluse; the One went to others, the other summons men to come to him; the One prayed for His enemies, the other revenges himself by cursing and slaying; the One gave His life for the flock, the other gives only a sham absolution which brings spiritual death to thousands; the One sought God's glory, the other seeks his own glory.(1) Some of the bitterness of Wyclif may be seen not only in his Latin works, but also in the vernacular, so that the common people might know where he stood. In his controversial tracts in English he calls the Pope:

".... the cruel manquellere of Rome, not Petris successour but Cristis enemye, and the emperours maistir, and poison under colour of holynesse....he destroieth the feith of holy Chirche... he is cause well and grounde of distruction of Cristene feith and good religion."(2)

Perhaps Dr. Schaff's opinion is none too extreme when he says, "He (Wyclif) put pontiffs into hell as freely as did Dante."(3), though we must admit there seems to be a modification of these extreme anti-papal views in one place in the Trialogus, where the Pope is called "pater beatissimus".(4)

Wyclif's invectives were hurled also at the cardinals and at all the remainder of the false ecclesiastical hierarchy.

"The ordre of kyngis and dukis and knygtis and of servauntis to hem ben groundid in goddis lawe, but not of popes and cardenals." (5)

To him it is rank heresy to cling to the popular belief that "if the Pope and cardinals assert a thing to be the sense of Scripture, therefore so it is." This would be to put them above the Apostles.(6) The cardinalate has no Scriptural warrant, was

- (1) De Blasphemia, 68-69; De Papa, Matt. Eng. Works, 462-3
- (2) Ye Grete Sentence of Curs Expounded, S.E.W., 277-278
- (3) Schaff, John Huss, 52
- (4) Trialogus, IV, VII, 268
- (5) De Papa, Matt. Eng. Works, 480
- (6) Trialogus, IV, X, 280

wrongfully instituted, and is a menace to the spiritual welfare of the Church.(1) The election of the Pope by the cardinals carries with it no authority.(2) Both the Pope and his cardinals may be "foreknown".(3) Wyclif uses an ingenious device to show his contempt for them by making their name, by syllables, affirm their wickedness: "CARior DIaboli Natus LIcium Seminator". A touch of irony, perhaps humor, is seen when he further plays with the word, making it (cardinalis) mean the hinges (cardines) of the door of the broad way which leads to destruction.(4) He is early led to the conclusion that the whole court of Rome is a "nest of mischievous foxes"(5) of which the King should be strangely suspicious, since each member feels himself exempt from the obligations of the civil law. This court had invented its own system of self-perpetuation, and by a triple shelter of protection sought to be free from external circumstances which might threaten. This shelter was (a) that it was above all human judgments, (b) that every Christian is bound to obey all the commands of the Curia, and (c) that the Curia has the right of ruling other Churches.(6) It is almost needless to say that Wyclif violently disagreed with these haughty propositions of self-contained authority and self-perpetuation.

Wyclif faces very definitely the matter of the number of orders, opposing the multiplicity of orders which a man-made system had developed. The Roman Church felt that it had to justify the existence of the many branches of the Curia which

- (1) De Blasphemia, 65-66
- (2) Opus Evangelium, III, 109
- (3) De Apostasia, 200
- (4) De Blasphemia, 65
- (5) De Ecclesia, 357
- (6) Ibid., 357-358

burdened the people of the Church universal, so we hear her "Doctor Angelicus" saying:

"Multiplicity of Orders was introduced into the Church for three reasons. First, to show forth the wisdom of God, which is reflected in the orderly distinction of things both natural and spiritual ... Secondly, in order to succor human weakness, because it would be impossible for one man, without his being heavily burdened, to fulfil all things pertaining to the Divine mysteries.... Thirdly, that men may be given a broader way for advancing (to perfection), seeing that the various duties are divided among men, so that all become co-operators of God." (1)

Wyclif, so often disagreeing with Aquinas, strongly opposed this orthodox view of the Church, claiming that a line must somewhere be drawn in the number of Church dignities. The answer is found in Christ, for in His omniscience and love He established but two orders in the early Church, the priest and the deacon.(2) Had more been necessary, Christ and His apostles would not have held their peace about them.(3) These two alone are sufficient; but the spirit of Antichrist had entered the Church, and raised up many agents in the guise of clergy; namely, popes, cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, officials, and deacons, with other offices and religious bodies without number.(4) In one place he speaks of twelve:

"....duodecim contra ecclesiam Christi machinantes, cuiusmodi communiter ponuntur papae & cardinales, patriarchae, archipraesules, episcopi, archidiaconi, officiales, decani, monarchi, & canonici bifurcati, pseudofratres introducti iam ultimo, & quaestores. Omnes autem isti duodecim et specialiter praelati Caesarei et fratres infundabiliter introducti, sunt manifesti discipuli Antichristi, quia libertatem Christi tollunt ac onerant sanctam ecclesiam impediunt, ne lex evangelii currat libere sicut olim." (5)

(1) Aquinas, Summa, III, Supplem., Q. 37, 30-31

(2) De Blasphemia, 66, 257; Of Mynysters in the Chirche, S. E. W., II, 421

(3) Trialogus, IV, XV, 297

(4) Ibid., IV, XV, 296. "quorum non est numerus neque ordo."

(5) Trialogus, IV, XXVI, 336. Peter Lombard lists seven different orders: "ostiarii, lectores, exorcistae, acolyti, diaconi, subdiaconi, sacerdotes". Sent. IV, 24

He felt that the Church had incurred great guilt for these "Caesarean innovations".(1) It is indeed difficult to determine the true number of the existing Church dignities of his day, but his mention of "the twelve daughters of the diabolical leech"(2) or "the twelve tormentors of the Church" would lead us to believe that that number perhaps would include all the orders of the clergy, major and minor. His reference to "leech" seems appropriate since this multiple hierarchy was responsible for sending out of the English realm one hundred thousand pounds per year.(3) He concludes, from both a righteous and an economic point of view, that no pope or body of cardinals is necessary for the true life of the Church, for Christ alone is sufficient (4), and that it would be better for the Church if there were neither popes nor bishops, but by throwing aside the whole Caesarean tradition, poor priests might be allowed to teach Christ's law in simplicity and sincerity.(5)

One further point needs to be noticed concerning the Reformer's conception of holy orders, or rather those in orders. He did not approve of these servants of Christ, set apart by ordination, in any kind of secular employment, though strangely enough he had himself been in the service of the Crown -- but always, perhaps, in some religious connection. Too many men had left the sacred calling of the Church to engage in secular interests. Some had become traitors to a holy cause, and for the sake of worldly lucre had engaged in occupations which were not in keeping with the life of an ordained priest of God.(6) Prelates

- (1) Cf. "Tracts and Treatises", 165
- (2) De Blasphemia, 54
- (3) Ibid., 172 f., 256, 259, 261, 272 f.
- (4) De Civ. Dom. I, 43, 380
- (5) Cf. Workman's Wyclif, II, 249
- (6) De Blasphemia, 258-259

neglectful of their spiritual duties have no right to be paid.

(1) Wyclif relies on the accepted authority of Augustine, who claims that there are certain things lawful for the layman which are to be held unlawful for priests, for as the ministers of Christ they are to set a higher standard of purity and moral attainment than those who have not been set apart to an holy calling.(2) The Reformer mentions in this connection that it is Pharasaic for the hierarchy to forbid marriage to the clergy, and at the same time to permit their holding worldly office-- it is but to strain away the gnat and swallow the camel.(3) The true priest must not seek secular authority, for he already has an authority more honorable in the sight of God, and a pre-eminence in spiritual things which must include humility.(4) So confirmed is his view in this matter that he goes to the extreme in saying that civil dominion for a servant of God is to him worse than the horrible sin of fornication.(5) Such language is surprising in this connection for one who is usually so reserved and sane in his expressions. Some priests had quite inexcusably-- even in defiance of canon law -- entered such functions as chancellors, treasurers, clerks of the Privy Seal, and Petty Bag, and even clerks of the kitchen.(6) He argues clearly that domestic affairs should never claim a priest's time and attention, when his business is certainly with sacred things, such as dispensing the sacrament of the altar, engaging in prayer (7), and living a life of poverty after the manner of Christ.(8) Since

(1) Sermones, II, Sermo LI, 369. This whole sermon is against the current negligence of the clergy.

(2) De Officio Regis, 30, 59

(3) Ibid., 29

(4) Ibid., 142; Sermones, III, 217

(5) De Ecclesia, 365, 251

(6) De Blasphemia, 261

(7) Ibid., 261

(8) Trialogus, IV, XV, 298

the apostles had found that they could not properly perform their spiritual ministry and continue in worldly employment (1), then it is readily seen that those priests who attempt it are not only acting contrary to Scripture, but are actually bringing dishonor upon the Church of Christ.(2) Wyclif's conclusion in this matter is that if a priest would keep his clerical privilege, he must refuse secular work; or if he must engage in secular service, then he should renounce holy orders and become a layman.(3)

SUMMARY: We can, in conclusion, summarize Wyclif's main beliefs in connection with orders as being: first, a belief in the universal priesthood of believers, which view struck at the very foundation of this sacrament, and denied the priestly character's being indelibly imprinted from the hands of the bishop, yet a view which still held the priestly office in high honor provided the priest were sincere; second, the identifying of the office of bishop and presbyter, as in the New Testament days of the apostles; third, the reduction of all clerical offices to two -- priest and deacon -- with the consequent rejecting of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. On the principle that one cannot serve both God and mammon, all in holy orders should refrain from secular pursuits, giving their whole time in spiritual service to the cause of Christ. Thus in the light of this overwhelming evidence, we conclude that the Reformer was truly a Protestant, and we agree with a modern historian who says of this fourteenth century Oxford don,

"...in recoil from the hierarchy and all its ways, he is led to a position which can almost be described as Presbyterian." (4)

- (1) De Blasphemia, 262-263 (2) Ibid., 262
- (3) De Blasphemia, 263-4; Sermones, II, Sermo LI, 372-3
- (4) Hugh Watt, Representative Churchmen of Twenty Centuries, John Wyclif, 181. See also Wordsworth's Address, 28; Vaughan's Wycliffe, I, 392-8; II, 274

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

One of the peculiar contradictions of the medieval Church is that it considered virginal purity a special virtue, and at the same time countenanced marriage as one of the seven sacraments. To justify this position, and also to fit marriage into the sacramental system, required a great deal of ingenuity on the part of the theologians, and the difficulties were never quite surmounted. About the best they could do was to assign this sacrament to an inferior rank as compared to the other six, although as regards antiquity it was first; to this day the Aristotelian categories of matter and form have never been fully and satisfactorily explained. The Western Church maintained that holy orders and matrimony so exclude each other that he who receives the one must, as a general rule, renounce the other.(1)

Marriage in all times and among all peoples has been either an essentially religious function, or at least one accompanied by religious rites. Jews and Christians alike have regarded it with great reverence because it was ordained of God in paradise; it is natural in its purpose, but Divine in its origin. Among Christians, however, varying opinions exist as to the sacramentality of marriage, for historians admit that not a single feature exists in Christian marriage as to the external rite that cannot be traced to the nuptial ceremonies of the old pagan Roman Empire.(2) But the prayers, ministerial blessing, and doctrinal expression of the Christian ceremonies today give a peculiar sanctity to marriage in the light of the New Testament teachings -- so much so that some branches of Christendom have elevated it to a sacrament of the Church. Marriage as a

(1) Aquinas, Summa, III, Suppl. Q.53, art.3

(2) Hastings, Encycl. of Religion and Ethics, VIII, 435

sacrament is mentioned as early as Augustine (1), where it is ranked with baptism and holy orders; and Ambrose is in support of this view. Official action by the Church in naming marriage as a sacrament did not come until the Council of Florence (1431-1437), and was confirmed by the Council of Trent.(2) Both actions were based on the Greek word *μυστήριον* of Eph.5:32, which the Vulgate renders "sacramentum". There is some claim that Innocent IV included marriage as a sacrament in the profession of faith prescribed for the Waldensians (Dec.18, 1208), yet this claim is not tenable since the reference is quite vague.(3) However, the sacramental character of marriage was at least implied in statements from the beginning of the thirteenth century, though it had not yet become a part of the defined dogma of the Church.

In the historical development of this sacrament the Church in the West finally made marriage and holy orders incompatible. As early as the Council of Elvira (about 306) we find that marriage was actually forbidden the clergy. The action of this local council in Spain was not taken any too seriously, for a similar proposal was made at Nicaea in 325, which met with rejection. It was not until the time of Hildebrand, 1079, that the celibacy of the clergy was made compulsory, although some married priests continued in Great Britain until the time of the Reformation, especially in the Celtic Church.

Although the Western Church claims to have accepted from the first the complete sacramentality of marriage, it was not until the sixteenth century that an attempt was made to define the real essence of the marriage contract as to matter, form, and its

(1) De Bono Conjugi, Ch.xxiv; De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia, I, x.

(2) Trent, Sess. XXIV, canons 1 and 12.

(3) Denzinger-Bannwart, Enchiridion, n.424 -- reference from Catholic Encyclopedia, IX, 707

minister.(1) We are, therefore, compelled to resort to a period following Wyclif in order to get a defined view, and that all too inadequate, on this subject. Thomas Aquinas had already stated that marriage was a sacrament, and that for its validity words were unnecessary.(2) Its whole essence and grace-producing power, according to the "angelic doctor", consist in the union of man and woman (in the presence of the priest), and not in the additional blessing of the priest prescribed by the Church.(3) Petrus de Palude (1275-1342) had also said:

"The essence of marriage consists in the mutual consent, which the parties mutually express; this consent confers the sacrament, and not the priest by his blessing; he only confers a sacramental."(4)

This idea was upheld by the Council of Trent, with the additional thought that marriage in its essential requirements is held to be ever the same, monogamic and indissoluble.(5)

Since every contract contains two elements, namely, the offering of a right and the acceptance of it, the same may be said for the marriage contract. In elevating the marriage contract to a sacrament, and attempting to apply the Aristotelian categories of form and matter to it, the Church interpreted matrimony in the sacramental system in general as follows: in the absence of a visible material element, the theologians asserted that the mutual declaration of consent of the parties contracting the marriage, with the accompanying offer of the marriage right, constitutes the matter of the sacrament;

(1) By Melchior Canus, (d. 1560). See Catholic Encyclopedia, IX, 710

(2) In IV Dent., Dist. I, i, 3

(3) Catholic Encyclopedia, IX, 711

(4) Commentarium in IV Librum Sententiarum (1329-30), Dist.V, Q.xi-- quoted from Catholic Encyclopedia, IX, 711; and Aquinas had said "...benedictis sacerdotis est quoddam sacramentale".(Q.42, art.1)

(5) Trent, Sess. XXI, canon 1

~~sacrament~~; and the mutual acceptance in such a declaration constitutes the form.(1) The minister of the sacrament is not the priest, but the two who mutually consent to the union -- the grace being conferred only through faith. Thus marriage is to be considered in a somewhat different sense from the other sacraments, since in all the others the representative of the Church (priest or bishop) confers the grace of the sacrament; however, in marriage the priest is the authorized witness of the Church to the contract, while the contracting parties really administer the sacrament to themselves.(2)

No "character indelebilis" is conferred in this sacrament, although the indissolubility and permanence of marriage is akin to the indelibility of the stamp conferred in baptism, confirmation and orders. Death alone dissolves a marriage which is held to be valid by the Church; if invalid, there were many ways whereby it could be annulled. Long and technical is the list of impediments to marriage upheld by canon law, although no trace of these burdensome restrictions is to be found before the fifth century. Some of these impediments are impuberty, previous marriage existing, consanguinity (prohibited within the fourth degree), and affinity, both natural and spiritual.

There can be little doubt, once we have seen the testimony, that Wyclif's views on marriage and family life, though distinctly Puritan in character, were for his own day quite sane and enlightened. The Oxford Reformer is certainly not a strict Romanist in his interpretation of matrimony -- in fact he cannot be called a Romanist in connection with any of the seven sacraments, although his mind was still colored by the Church's

- (1) Seeberg, Dogmen., III, 498-500; Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 273-274; Cath. Encycl., IX, 712
- (2) Catholic Encyclopedia, IX, 700

position in regard to them. He was far ahead of his own age in his lofty interpretation of marriage as an essential and sacred custom in the social order. The Reformer has often been termed a social revolutionary with his doctrine of the universal lordship of the righteous, which involved the Socratic doctrine that all goods must be held in common-- but he was very careful to exclude the community of wives (1), for he gives to women and marriage an exalted position, with a proper parent-child relationship resulting therefrom. He lived in a period when most of the secular, and even some of the sacred writers, placed women and marriage on a very low plane. From Chaucer we can hear the complaint made by the Wife of Bath:

"For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
That any clerk wol speke good of wyves."

Even though Wyclif holds a high opinion of womanhood, it can hardly be said that he places women on an equality with men. He enjoins them to be obedient to their husbands, not as slaves, but as companions.(2) He does not hesitate to discuss his belief that women are not made in the image of God as is man (3), claiming as his support the words of Paul in I Cor. 11:7, and the authority of the renowned Augustine. Man came from God by creation, but woman came from man, and bears rather the image of man than of God. It is for this reason that women should be veiled; a lady "quia non est imago et gloria Dei"(4) needs to be so covered. He holds that women are frail members (5) ("freel as water"), yet they are not to be despised because of this frailty, but are rather to be cared for, and due allowances are to be made for

- (1) De Civili Dominio, I, XIV, 99-100
- (2) De Apostasia, 17; Trialogus, IV, XX, 318
- (3) De Officio Regis, 12
- (4) Ibid., 12, 21
- (5) S. E. W., II, Sermon CLXXXV, 139

their imperfections! A good woman he considered one of the best things in all of God's creation, but a bad one he considered one of the worst things in existence. Wyclif's lofty opinion of womanhood is certainly reflected in his high conception of the sacrament of marriage.

Wyclif never hesitates to call marriage a sacrament, even referring to it in one passage as the "venerable sacrament" (1), and stating elsewhere that it was instituted of God in Paradise (2), and sanctioned by the Savior.(3) Marriage is included in the list of sacraments given in the Trialogus (4), and so high is his opinion of matrimony that he definitely states that it exceeds other sacraments ("matrimonium excedit alia sacramenta"(5))-- just which ones we do not know, but he probably refers here to confirmation and orders, for his opinion of these sacraments was decidedly low in comparison to the others. From the following excerpts we may see how the Reformer defines marriage:

"....matrimonium, quod licet non sit signum immediatum ad procreationem hominis naturalem, est tamen signum efficax per quod notatur, sine peccato luxurie licere in esse naturali hominis procreare." (6)

"....matrimonium est conjugum legitima copulatio, qua secundum Dei legem licet eis sine crimine filios procreare." (7)

"This bodily matrimonye is a sacrament and figure of the gostly wedlock bitwene Crist and holy Chirche, as Seynt Poul seith. Also, this wedlok is nedeful to save mankynde bi generacioun to the day of dom, and to restore and fulfille the

(1) Trialogus, IV, XX, 315; the same term is used to describe the Eucharist, also in Trial., IV, IV, 257

(2) De Mandatis Divinis, XXV, 362

(3) Trialogus, IV, XX, 315

(4) Ibid., IV, I, 246

(5) Ibid., IV, XX, 315

(6) Ibid., IV, I, 246

(7) Ibid., IV, XX, 315

noumbre of Aungelis, dampned for pride, and the noumbre of seyntis in hevene, and to save men and wommen fro fornycacion." (1)

In one passage Wyclif appears to take a very low view of marriage, saying:

".... respondeo concedendo, quod quorumcunque duorum conjugum copulatio sit matrimonium." (2)

This would seem to admit that carnal, common law marriage might be considered a sacrament, but any misgivings which the reader might have in this connection are later dissipated by the statement:

"....certe asserens, quod non est legitimum matrimonium, nisi Deus approbando conjugat taliter conjugatos", etc. (3)

Wyclif accepted a two-fold marriage, a common conception of his day, and even of the present:

"Oure Lord God Almyghty spekith in his lawe of tweie matrimoneys or wedlokis. Ye first is gostly matrimonye, betwixte Crist and holy Chirche, that is Cristene soulis ordeyned to blisse. Ye secunde matrimonye is bodily or gostly, bitwene man and womman. bi just consent, after Goddis lawe." (4)

Of these two marriages the first is better, for to Wyclif the spiritual is always better than the material. This "best matrimonye" is temporarily broken by man's lack of faith and his departure from righteous living.(5) This tendency to worldliness on the part of man is a weakness of the flesh, and when he falls prey to his temptation it amounts to spiritual adultery.(6)

In the opinion of the Reformer the true benefits derived from bodily marriage are three: "fides, sacramentum, et proles"-- and admittedly he derives this from Augustine (7),

- (1) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, I, in S.E.W., III, 189
- (2) Trialogus, IV, XX, 316
- (3) Ibid., IV, XX, 317
- (4) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, I, in S. E. W., III, 188
- (5) Ibid., S. E. W., III, 188
- (6) Ibid., S. E. W., III, 189. See James 4:4
- (7) Augustine, De Peccato Orig., C.34, vol.x, 270

whose words the Oxford don honors almost as much as those from Scripture. Bodily matrimony can take place only when the mutual and full consent of both parties is secured, and there must be no mental reservations:

"This wedlok shulde be maad with ful consent of bothe partis, principaly to the worschipe of God, to lyve clenly in the ordre that he made, and bring forth childre to fulfille the chosen noumbre of seyntis in blisse, and not to have flescly lustis withoute reson and drede of God." (1)

It appears that Wyclif was not concerned about the matter of the sacrament -- at least he has no contribution to make in this field, for he probably accepted the view that mutual consent was the matter-- but he does engage in scholastic argument over the form of the sacrament, devoting a brief chapter to a consideration of this puzzling problem. Adhering strictly to his great principle that the objective is insignificant as compared to the subjective, he stresses the fact that words and signs do not make a marriage, but rather the mutual consent which is approved of God.

"Veritas quidem mihi videtur, quod assistente consensu conjugum et Domino approbante, subducto quocunque signo sensibili foret satis; ideo lex conscientiae et consensus Domini in bene viventibus in contractu hujusmodi rectissime regularent. In verbis enim qualitercunque aptatis extrinsecus potest esse deceptio, ut dicendo de praesenti, 'capiote in uxorem' potest esse quod mens dicat oppositum propter complendam voluptatem. Cum ergo verbum mentis sit praeponderantius verbo oris, et ad verum matrimonium requiritur consensus, videtur quod non sit matrimonium per verba hujusmodi de praesenti. Judices ergo qui ex nudis verbis judicant pro matrimonio, judicant contra iudicium legis Dei; sed maledicta sit lex hujusmodi, qua iudex coartabit per censuras suas fictas jugum personarum, ut faciant contrarie legi Dei! Similiter videtur quod omnia talia verba de praesenti sint falsa, et sic contractus falsus quem Deus non approbat, sicut nec verba." (2)

Characteristically as a Schoolman, he deals with hair-splitting

(1) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, in S.E.W., III, 191
 (2) Trialogus, IV, XXII, 322-323

distinctions, and discusses what difference might arise in marriage should different phrases be employed, such as "Te accipio in uxorem", "Accipio te in uxorem", or "Te accipiam pro uxore"--with other possibilities of varying tenses and moods. In other words, are the commonly accepted phrases of the marriage ceremony to be used "cum verbis de praesenti, et non cum verbis de praeterito vel futuro"? (1) He is inclined to think that the received form of the marriage contract may be grounds for declaring the marriage invalid on a defect of form, since it makes the man say that which is untrue. He cannot say "I take thee, N., to be my wedded wife", etc., until by her consent she becomes so. Some writers, evidently hostile to Wyclif, have unjustly pointed out that the Reformer's conclusion here was merely a bait to conciliate those who felt disposed to repudiate their conjugal obligations. (2) But this was far from his intent. To us his lengthy treatment seems to be darkening counsel with words!--yet we can detect a certain sincerity in this scholastic exercise which has for its purpose the setting forth of the principle that words are not necessary; they of themselves do not make consent -- there must be something deeper than just audible sounds.

"...verba consensum non faciunt, sed illud quod movet animum ad consensum", etc. (3)

If mere words make a marriage, then it is completed twice!

"...qua ergo regula foret idem matrimonium bis completum, primo in contractu conjugum pre se facto, et secundo in solenni ritu ad ostium ecclesiae a sacerdote per verba." (4)

His conclusion is that neither words nor signs constitute marriage, but rather the mutual consent of the contracting parties,

(1) Trialogus, IV, XXII, 322

(2) See Anonymous, The True John Wycliffe, 10. (London, 1884)

(3) Trialogus, IV, XXII, 323

(4) Ibid., IV, XXII, 324

with the approval of God.(1) Thus the form of the sacrament gives way to the matter in basic importance.

Since faith is one of the benefits resulting from marriage, Wyclif exhorts all who enter this sacred contract to live sober, righteous lives, and always to be temperate and considerate of each other in their conjugal relations. Industry is recommended on the part of both, since the best remedy against all evil lechery is work, "for ydelnesse is the develis panter, to tempte men to synne".(2) Wives may be pure and upright examples to their husbands, inspiring them to the Christian faith. (3) Women being inferior to men are to be matrimonially subject to them, yet there are limits to this wifely obedience when men seek to go against the laws of God. Wives are subject to husbands "in the Lord", as Paul points out.(4) The marriage law has its rights within the home, and may be transgressed in five ways, which he names: by wanton indulgence, by unnatural intercourse, at prohibited times, at forbidden places, and at times close to delivery or menstruation.(5) And when unnatural practices arise, such as the sale and loan of wives, he raises his voice violently against such curses of Satan.(6)

Another good arising from marriage is children, and consequently the Reformer is vitally opposed to any unequal yoking, such as a young man and an old, barren woman. This kind of marriage is but to put the carnal above the spiritual.

"Also this contract shulde not be maad
bitwixte a yonge man and an olde bareyne widewe,
passid child-berynge, for love of worldly muk, as

- (1) Trialogus, IV, XXII, 323-324
- (2) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S. E. W., III, 200
- (3) Ibid., S. E. W., III, 193-194; 198
- (4) Sermones, II, Sermo XXVIII, 208; De Civ. Dom., 167
- (5) De Mandatis Divinis, XXV, 348-349
- (6) Opus Evangelium, I, 172, S. E. W., III, 167

men ful of coveitise usen sumtyme,-- for than cometh soone debat and avoutrie and enemyte, and wast of goodis, and sorowe and care ynowgh." (1)

And where the possibility of child-bearing is absent, he expresses in a Latin work that much sin can arise from the marital union which is but another emphasis upon the carnal aspect of marriage:

"Quod tales qui non possunt procreare carnaliter quodammodo illicite copulantur." (2)

But his usual insistence that marriage without the expectation of offspring is a sinful attempt to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, appears to be somewhat modified elsewhere:

"For three skillis may a man knowe fleschly his rightful wif, the first to geten children, to fulfille the noumbre of men and wymmen that schullen be savyd; the secunde to kepe his wif fro lecherie of othere men; the thridde is to kepe himself fro lecherie of othere wymmen." (3)

He taught that it is wrong to marry for money, for "dalliance" with women for "worldly muk" and gain is born of Satan. And his passing remark that newly-wedded husbands should not go to war is both interesting and practical! (4)

Marriage to the Reformer is an indissoluble bond, taken "pro suo perpetuo".(5) It is of God, and what God joins together man cannot separate. Excommunication, for example, cannot dissolve it, for marriage is of God, excommunication merely of man; individuals are duty bound to obey God rather than man-made decrees.(6) In spite of this indissolubility, Wyclif permits in his thinking a legal separation, or a bill of divorce-ment, remembering that it was granted to the Jews because of the

(1) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, in S.E.W., III, 191

(2) Trialogus, IV, XX, 317

(3) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S.E.W., III, 192

(4) Forshall and Madden, The Holy Bible, etc., I, Prologue, 6

(5) Trialogus, IV, XX, 316

(6) De Officio Regis, 170

hardness of their hearts.(1) We must note that on the whole he is vitally opposed to divorce, which is to him a sin (2) and a work of fiction.(3) It was far too common in his day, often secured by "false witnesse"(4), and with much of the blame of these false divorces resting upon the friars.(5) In both matters of marriage and divorce one must be led by conscience, and not be subject to man-made laws.(6) His warning to society as a whole is:

"And eche man war that he procure no fals devours, for money, ne frendischipe, ne enemye; for Crist biddeth no man departe atwyn hem that God hath joyned; but only for avoutre that part that kepith him clene may be departid from the otheris bed, and for noon other cause, as Crist seith hymself."(7)

It is the Reformer's firm conviction that grounds for divorce must be based on the New Testament teaching, namely, fornication which includes adultery.(8) No other reason is sufficient. He is plain to point out that ill-treatment is not a sufficient ground for divorce.(9) In a case involving clearly the transgression of the scriptural demands for purity, the couple may separate; but they are free to do no more than that, for subsequent re-marriage is forbidden-- "utraque persona inconjugata pro suo perpetuo remanente".(10) It is simply a separation "a toro"; and strangely enough, we find him advocating that senility and irreligion are also grounds for this separation "a toro".(11) We must express some admiration for Wyclif in his firm stand against re-marriage, and especially so when we recall that re-marriage in certain

- (1) De Mandatis Divinis, XXV, 362-363
- (2) Ibid., 362 f.
- (3) Trialogus, IV, XX, 317
- (4) Three Things Destroy This World, Matt.Eng.Works, 185; Trialogus, IV, XX, 317
- (5) Sermones, III, Sermo V, 39; Matt.Eng.Works, 20, 176, 185
- (6) Opus Evangelium, I, 177
- (7) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S. E. W., III, 192
- (8) Trialogus, IV, XXI, 319; De Mandatis Divinis, XXV, 363
- (9) Sermones, II, 208
- (10) Trialogus, IV, XXI, 319
- (11) De Mandatis Divinis, XXV, 363-364

cases was permitted implicitly or explicitly by the following Councils of the Church: Elvira (c.305), Vannes (465), Agde (506), Orleans (533), Compiègne (756), and Bourges (1031). As a student of history, he must have known of some, or all of these. Thus, by his condemnation of re-marriage, he not only shows his firm belief in the sacred and indissoluble nature of matrimony, but also his belief that an individual, evangelical interpretation of the Scriptures is above the action of ecclesiastical synods and councils insofar as their man-made decisions are not in accord with the precepts of the Word of God. However, in the consideration of divorce Wyclif makes allowance for the reconciliation of divorced parties:

"And yit thanne the clene part myght lyve chaste evere while the tother lyveth, or ellis be reconseled agen to the part. Nethelless the clene may dwelle forth with the tother lyveth that forfeis, bi weie of charite. And men supposen that that weie is gret charite, yif there be evydence that the tother part wolles do wel aftirward." (1)

But this in no way weakens his firm stand that marriage must forever remain sacred and indissoluble, for whatsoever God joins together, it is not within the province of man to put asunder. With this unfaltering conviction, it is surprising that he does not launch a tirade against the annulment of marriages, which was common in that day, but he is content to keep silent on the subject.

The more mature views of the Reformer reveal that he is a rebel against the Church's position in marriage in matters of consanguinity, clerical celibacy, and the common practice of simony in this sacrament; we have already seen how he differed from the orthodox position in regard to the interpretation of the form of the sacrament. As we have indicated earlier in this chapter, the Church held that consanguinity was an impediment

(1) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S.E.W., III, 192

to marriage -- but not so was Wyclif's belief. He claimed that those of blood relationship, even within prohibited degrees, might marry if they desired to do so, with the dispensation of God voiced through the Pope. He felt that even though this dispensation might sometimes be granted, it was not always correctly granted.(1) In regard to consanguineous marriages he shocked those of his own day, and many in subsequent generations (2) when he said:

"Tempore primi hominis fratres et sorores fuerunt ex ordinatione divina taliter conjugati: et tempore patriarcharum, ut Abraham, Isaac, et talium satis propinque cognati. Nec superest ratio quare non sic liceret hodie, nisi humana ordinatio quae dicit non solum ex cognatione, sed ex affinitate amorem inter homines dilatari: et causa haec hominum nimis debilis." (3)

It would seem from this passage that Wyclif's knowledge of eugenics was limited, or else his extreme Biblicism led him here into error. Even though he claimed to keep within the bounds of scriptural teaching, he must have regarded the several prohibitions of marriage in Leviticus 18 as being merely Levitical, and therefore obligatory only among Jews, and without a claim upon Christians. Canon Pennington tries to excuse Wyclif in his consanguineous position by venturing that these words of the Trialogus must have been written in haste, and by claiming that there is but the one passage in which the Reformer puts forward this claim (4), but Wyclif expresses it elsewhere, as I have indicated.

Yet the position put forward by Wyclif in his Trialogus is denied in the Prologue to the English Bible, when he says:

"Also this book (Leviticus) techith man to absteine fro wedlok of nygh kyn and affynyte, with ynne the ij degree of consanguynyte and affynite." (5)

(1) De Mandatis Divinis, XXV, 359

(2) See Lewis, Wyclif, 173

(3) Trialogus, IV, XX, 317-8; the same position may be found in Polemical Works, I, 167, and De Mandatis, 358-9

(4) Pennington, John Wiclif, 258

(5) Forshall and Madden, (op.cit.), I, Prologue, 4

Our explanation of this apparent contradiction is that this statement of the Prologue shows the hand of Purvey; some attribute the whole of the Prologue to this efficient disciple and servant of the Oxford Reformer. It is not reasonable to suppose that Wyclif denied his late assertion in the Trialogus in this connection. The arbitrary multiplication of prohibitions of marriage by the Church, extending them to what she called "spiritual affinity", seems to have been so repulsive to the Reformer that he practically rejects all prohibitions! This attitude Bishop Wordsworth describes as a characteristic specimen of the impatient waywardness of Wyclif's mind! (1)

A greater rebellion against the Church's position concerning marriage is seen in Wyclif's conviction that the clergy have a right to marry if they desire to do so.(2) The Reformer continued to hold his high regard for chastity as a virtue, and for a celibate clergy where it could be received-- even to the fanciful etymology of "caelibatus" from the phrase "beati in coeli"!-- but he rebelled against the idea of enforced celibacy and the Church's seeking to impose vows that were contrary both to human nature and to Scripture. He made bold to assert that there is ample divine warrant for the marriage of the clergy in Scripture, and that it is the wholesome, natural desire of men ("naturale et ex ordinatione divina").(3) Wyclif was too keen an historian to be deceived in this disciplinary measure of the Church as to an unmarried priesthood, for he knew that imposition of chaste vows was not the practice of the early Christian Church.

(1) Address by Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, John Wiclif: His Doctrine and Work, 33

(2) See discussion in H.C. Lea, History of Sacerdotal Celibacy, 323-325

(3) Trialogus, IV, XX, 315

From the close of the fourth century the principle that the clergy ought not to marry was universally adopted in theory in the Western Church (1), but it was certainly not carried out in practice (2); and only since the days of Gregory VII, 1079 A.D., had celibacy become a compulsory thing for the priests of the Roman Church. On the basis of history the claim cannot therefore be made that this disciplinary measure was held according to the famous dictum of Vincentius of Lerins, "quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus". (3) Priests in the Celtic Church were not forbidden to marry (4), and married priests continued in sections of Britain, in the remote rural areas of England, and certainly in the wild fastnesses of Wales in Wyclif's day. H. C. Lea expresses it thus:

"...sacerdotal marriage scarcely became obsolete in Wales before it was once more recognized as legitimate under the Reformation." (5)

And with Oxford surrounded by vast rural areas, and not far from the border of Wales, it is reasonable to suppose that Wyclif knew of these existing conditions. He was well aware that the privilege of marriage was granted the clergy in the Greek Churches of the East, as he pointedly says:

"In primitiva ecclesia ordinanti sunt monogami in episcopos.... et sic continuata est talis copula in Orientali Christianismo."

A Greek bishop while visiting Rome could even bring his wife and children along with him! (6)

Wyclif shows that priests are no different from others of the race of men (which in itself is something of a condemna-

- (1) Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VIII, 437
- (2) W.W. Capes, A Hist. of the Eng. Church, etc., 259
- (3) Vincentius of Lerins, Commonitorium, Cap. II, 3, 10 -- in R.S. Moxon edition, Cambridge, 1915
- (4) J. Meissner, The Celtic Church in England, 9, 193-205
- (5) H.C. Lea, Hist. of Sacerdotal Celibacy, I, 359 (1907 ed.)
- (6) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, II, 263

tion of orders) by claiming that they are of the same nature as lords in knowing the value of money, property, etc.(1), but the priests are circumscribed by certain laws of the Church in that they must not hold lordship and must not marry.(2) Both priests and nuns are forbidden this sacrament (3), yet to impose these obligatory laws of celibacy is to increase adultery and fornication.(4) We can easily see how he condemns their secret lustful lives from the following passage:

"Prelatis..forsaken as venym matrimonye, that is leffel bi holy writt (5), till newe vowis of contynense of worldli clerkis weren brought in bi disceit of the fend. For many prestis now kepen neither matrimonye ne charite, but defoulen wyves, maidens, widewis and nunnes in eche manere of lecherie, and children ben morthered, and synne agenst kynde is not clene fled. For sathanas caste to purchase worldly honour and plenty of worldly goodis & welfare & ydelnesse to yonge prestis, & dalliaunce with women & prive rownyng; & is redy nyght & day to stere bothe partis to lecherie, & sumtyme to hyden here synne bi fals othis & mortheryng of children & sumtyme haunten it opynly & schamen not ther-of." (6)

Something of his evangelical zeal for righteousness is seen in another passage, where he shows that obligatory celibacy among the clergy is unscriptural, hypocritical, and morally pernicious:

"And herefore, sith fornicacioun is so perilous, and men and wymmen ben so frele, God ordeynede prestis in the olde lawe to have wyves, and nevere forbode it in the newe lawe, neither bi Crist ne bi his apostlis, but rather approvede it. But now, bi ypocrisie of fendis and fals men, manye bynden hem to presthod and chastite and forsaken wifis bi Goddis lawe, and schenden maydenes and wifis, and fallen foulest of alle."(7)

And in a sermon in the vernacular he dares to speak of this unscriptural imposition, pointing out that Christ virtually con-

- (1) De Papa, Cap.8, Matt. Eng. Works, 472
- (2) Ibid., Cap.8, Matt. Eng. Works, 474
- (3) Tractatus de Preudo-Freris, Cap.3, Matt. Eng. Works, 303
- (4) Of the Leaven of the Pharisees, Cap.2, Matt. Eng. Wks., 7
- (5) The same idea is expressed in De Officio Pastoralis, 46
- (6) Of Prelates, Cap.35, Matt. Eng. Works, 100
- (7) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S. E. W., III, 189-190

demned clerical celibacy by approving marriage among the apostles:

"Here mai men douten, and trete of the staat
and liif of prestis; how thei ben dowid and wyfleees
agens Goddis autorite; for Crist forfendid dowyng bothe
in him and in hise apstolis, and approvede wedding in
apostlis and many other."(1)

This forbidding to marry was to Wyclif the fulfilling of the
prophecy in I Timothy 4:1-3-- a full proof to the Reformer that
the Church of Rome had become the enemy of God and of mankind.(2)
The licentiousness of the clergy had proved the utter ruin of
many a congregation to the great detriment of religion and the
good name of the Church of Christ (3); the vows of chastity im-
posed upon the priests and nuns simply were not kept (4), which
fact gave rise to the horrible fact of child murder-- one sin
leading to a greater-- so that their yielding to the lures of
the flesh might not be discovered.(5)

In continuing his argument that priests should be
allowed to marry, Wyclif cites the scriptural example that a
bishop should be a man of one wife.(6) This was emphasized not
only to prove his point, but also to pour scorn upon the secret
practices of some bishops in keeping one or more concubines.(7)
And he is bold to assert that this evil custom is not limited to
the bishops of his day, for in speaking of the princes of Israel
in connection with Jairus, he says:

"...and this man here, that was a keper
of a synagoge, as now ben persones; and thes men
hadden comounly wyves and children, as preestis han
wers now, for thei han out of wedloke."(8)

Of course it was not necessary for a priest or bishop to be

- (1) Sermon CV, in S. E. W., I, 364
- (2) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S. E. W., III, 189
- (3) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, II, 191-192
- (4) The Order of the Priesthood, Cap. 9, Matt. Eng. Wks., 170
- (5) Of Prelates, Cap. 35, Matt. Eng. Works, 100
- (6) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, II, 184-185
- (7) Of Prelates, 73; The Office of Curates, 156 (Matt. Eng. Wks.)
- (8) Sermon XXIV, S. E. W., I, 59

married, for some of the apostles lived virginal lives, but if married he must be monogamous. In an early work Wyclif had already pointed out that marriage was a duty under the old covenant, being held in the highest esteem, for by it the promised Messiah would come. But in the new covenant it is superseded by the spiritual relation of faith, for the spiritual is above the carnal.(1) He points out that bigamy, though found in the Bible, is at all times odious, being introduced by Lamech without divine dispensation, and for which he was required to suffer. Wyclif is of the opinion that bigamy, sinful though it is, is less intolerable than the marriage practice of polyandry. He reaches this conclusion from the analogy that the Church of Christ can have but one Spouse.(2) For the Church to forbid clerical marriages, and still permit her servants to hold civil offices intended for the laity, is but to commit the ancient sin of straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel.(3) Wyclif feels that chastity and matrimony are not incompatible, and that the whole Church would be infinitely better off if marriage were granted to the priests (4); and if not granted, then those in orders should be given the privilege of returning willingly to the laity, rather than continuing to live in the hypocrisy of chaste vows with their secret sins.(5) Marriage cannot justly be considered an obstacle to merit, for Peter was a married man, yet a true disciple of Christ (6) -- a most embarrassing fact for the advocates of sacerdotal celibacy!

(1) De Civili Dominio, I, 168

(2) Ibid., I, 168-169

(3) De Officio Regis, 29; De Ecclesia, 365

(4) De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae, II, 262; III, 83

(5) Sermones, II, 194, 373

(6) De Officio Regis, 30

The Lollards who followed Wyclif stressed this point of allowing the clergy to marry if they desired, it being one of the chief emphases in their revolt against Rome. Gairdner indicates this when he says:

"The points which the Lollards still regarded as heads of papal idolatry were the prohibition of communion in both kinds, the use of private masses, and the enforced celibacy of the clergy." (1)

The first point Wyclif never raised; the second one he strongly resented; and the third, as I have indicated, he openly condemned.

Wyclif's reforming spirit is seen also in his rebellion against the common practices of simony in this sacrament. Admittedly this practice was not officially approved by the Church, yet the corrupt hierarchy apparently condoned (or winked at) this wide-spread evil in Wyclif's day. The Reformer says:

"How the sacrament of matrimonye is bought and sold men may openly se. For no man schal be weddid but yif he paie sixe pens on the bok, and a ryng for his wif, and sumtyme a peny for the clerk, and covenant makyng what he schal paie for a morewe masse, and ellis he schal not be weddid though he lyve in newre so gret lecherie." (2)

It was by this curse of simony in marriage, plus money accruing from confessions concerning the marriage relationship, legal and otherwise, that leading ecclesiastics grew powerful and wealthy.

"...and her-bi heighe prelatys wynnyn mony thousand pondis in fewe yeris and holden grete housholde as lordis." (3)

Perhaps a word needs to be said concerning Wyclif's conception of virginity, although we fully realize that this is not

- (1) Gairdner, Lollardy and the Reformation, II, 179
- (2) Ye Grete Sentence of Curs Expounded, VI, S. E. W., III, 284. (Although Workman doubts the authenticity of this tract-- John Wyclif, I, 331)
- (3) Of Prelates, Cap. 35, Matt. Eng. Works, 100

directly connected with the sacrament of marriage. Yet it is a related idea. The Reformer's views of virginity were in accord with the orthodoxy of his day.(1) In his opinion virginity was better than marriage, and in all sincerity he exclaims:

"Ideo benedicta sit conversatio virginum
sine tali copula!" (2)

He held that it is proved to be better than marriage both by Christ's teachings and by His example (3), which fact is probably the real reason why Wyclif never married; and so far as we know, no Lollard priest of his day ever ventured to do so.(4) But after Wyclif's passing it is known that many of the Lollards became extreme in their views and actions concerning this highly respected virtue. From Lewis Clifford, a Lollard who recanted, we are informed that the Lollards in 1402 held that unmarried priests and nuns "be not approved of God, for they destroy the holy seed of which shall grow the second Trinity".(5) But the Oxford Reformer makes clear his position in regard to the comparison between marriage and the chaste life of virginity:

"Netheless, though matrimonye be good and greatly comendid of God, yit elene virgynite is moche betre-- and wedlok also, as Seynt Poul seith opynli; for Jesus Crist, that lyvede most perfitly, was evere clene virgine, and not weddid bodely, and so was his modir evere virgine, and Jon Evaungelist. Seynt Austyn and Jerom specially witnessen wel this in many bokis. Netheless virgynite is so heye and so noble that Crist comanndid it not generally, but saide, who may take, take he it. And therefore Poul gaf no comaundement of virgynite, but gaf conseil to hem that weren able therto. And thus prestis that kepen clene chastite in bodi and soule doun best." (6)

(1) See Workman, John Wyclif, II, 396

(2) Trialogus, IV, XX, 317

(3) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S. E. W., III, 190

(4) My authority here is E.S.Holt, John de Wycliffe, 187

(5) Workman, John Wyclif, II, 402 where he quotes Lewis Clifford. See also Lollard conclusions in Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 361, 367-368

(6) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S. E. W., III, 190

And in some of his Latin works Wyclif sounds the praise of the chaste life in body and in soul (1), but he realizes as well the grave dangers involved in the vows of chastity, and because of the weaknesses of human flesh, he knows that the virginal life is meant for only a few.

It is only natural that in connection with marriage Wyclif should express a few words concerning the relationship of parents to each other and to their children. This, again, is not in strict keeping with the sacrament of marriage, yet the connection is so close that a few words of Wyclif's views on this subject might not be amiss. To the Reformer there are three common failures of married people, which he lists as: (a) parents care more for the temporal success of their children than for their spiritual welfare; (b) wives too often waste their husbands' substance on begging friars and individuals of ill repute; and (c) parents, especially the mothers, grieve and cry out against God if He in His providence takes their children "bi fair deeth".(2) He exhorts all husbands and wives to live in sobriety and self-control, remembering that God is the author of the marriage bond, and desires it to be kept clean and pure. He further urges them to remember that Christ is their Spouse in heaven.(3) Men should "take wyves in drede of God, for love of children, and not al for foul lust off body".(4)

SUMMARY: In the foregoing pages we have seen how Wyclif's interpretation of the sacrament of marriage contributed

- (1) Trialogus, III, XXIII, 207 f; IV, XX, 317;
Sermones I, 109, and II, 150
- (2) Of Weddid Men and Wifis, S. E. W., III, 198-200
- (3) Ibid., S. E. W., III, 200-201
- (4) Forshall and Madden, The Holy Bible, etc.,
I, Prologue, 35

to the streams of thought which finally united to produce the raging torrent of the Reformation. His contributions are chiefly that the form does not constitute or make marriage; that marriage is not an obstacle to spiritual merit; that celibacy should not be imposed upon the servants of the Church, for vows of chastity lead to secret sins which hinder the cause of righteousness; that simony in this sacrament is a curse both to society and to the Church; and that Rome has imposed too many man-made prohibitions concerning this sacrament. He also contributed to a higher Christian conception of the social order by his lofty opinions of womanhood and the high responsibility of parenthood, which opinions were far beyond those of his own day, and which helped to characterize him as the harbinger of a new era to come.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION

THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION

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The name of this sacrament, founded upon the words of James 5:14-15 and Mark 6:13, probably did not come into use in the Christian Church until about the seventh century. It appears first to be used by Bishop Sonnatius (1), but its technical use did not become current in western Christendom until toward the end of the twelfth century. The name has never become current in the Eastern Church, where it is more commonly known as εὐχέλαιον or prayer-oil. (2) The name "extreme unction" ('extrema unctio') in all probability was suggested by its being the last in order of the unctions the faithful would receive, probably being administered to those "in extremis", as the Catholic Encyclopedia suggests (3), and carrying with it a corresponding name "sacramentum exeuntium". The general practice of the Western Church is to administer this sacrament only to those suffering from serious illness, and thus at least remotely in danger of death.

This sacred rite of the Church, though its history is somewhat obscure, seems to have been in early use among Christians, but not as a sacrament. Its mention in the early Church is not frequent, though Augustine, Chrysostom, Irenaeus, and Tertullian all speak of it, but not in a sacramental sense. The use of oil was common in antiquity in connection with the sick, for it was considered to have medicinal and therapeutic qualities, and was often administered by Christians in private life,

(1) 15th Canon ascribed to him. Cf. Encycl. of Rel. & Ethics, V, 673

(2) Catholic Encyclopedia, V, 672

(3) Ibid, V, 716; - though this is questioned in Encycl. of Rel. & Ethics, V, 672

and even by the sick themselves. Popular superstition soon connected this rite with a divine healing, and oil was considered to possess not only natural powers, but supernatural as well. This remedial measure, once connected with a religious idea, became associated with the Church; and even the oil in the Church lamps began to be used, and the oil sanctified by the Church relics. (1) Thus there slowly developed the idea of the sacramental character of the oil used in unction, and this rite came to be considered efficacious for healing not only those physically sick, but also those spiritually sick; so that by the end of the eighth century it was brought into relationship with the remission of sins, and was thus associated with the sacrament of penance. At first laymen might administer the sacred oil in case a priest were not available, but its later sacramental significance slowly excluded the laity from administration -- in spite of the fact that Pope Innocent I in a letter to Bishop Decentius (416 A.D.) had stated that "even the simple faithful are allowed to use the blessed oil, and with much greater reason the bishop", etc. (2)

It is most difficult to determine at what time the rite was considered as a sacrament of the Church, but its sacramental character appears to have emerged around the close of the eighth century. It may have been earlier, although Hagenbach points out that it was the ninth century when unction was generally in use as a new sacrament. (3) No theologian had systematically treated of it as a sacrament, but the question of its

(1) Schaff-Herzog, *Encycl. of Rel. Knowledge*, IV, 251; Hastings, *Encycl. of Rel. & Ethics*, V, 672

(2) Quoted from *Encycl. of Rel. & Ethics*, V, 672

(3) Hagenbach, *History of Doctrines*, II, 368

repetition was raised in the twelfth century, when Abbot Godfried and St. Yves (or Ivo), Bishop of Chartres, agreed that it ought not to be repeated on the ground that no sacrament of the Church ought to be repeated.(!) Shortly afterwards, Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, upheld the Benedictine practice of repeating the sacrament, contending that the person anointed may on recovery have sinned again, and thus be in need of the remission of sins. The Cistercians of Clairvaux limited the sacred rite to once a year. Opposition to repetition soon died away, and it remained for the Council of Trent to decide once and for all that under certain conditions extreme unction may validly and lawfully be repeated. (1) Part of its decree reads:

"This unction is to be administered to the sick, but especially to those who seem to be at the point of death (*in exitu vitae*) ... If the sick recover after receiving this unction, they can again receive the aid of this sacrament, when they fall anew into a similar danger of death." (2)

Hugo of St. Victor is the first theologian to treat of this sacrament in a systematic way, dealing only with the problems of its repetition and institution. Yet it was only from the time of Thomas Aquinas that it was claimed to have been instituted by Christ himself, (3) and then in the sense of "in-sinuatio" -- the real "institutio" being attributed to the Apostle James. In Bonaventura and Aquinas the sacrament received fuller systematic treatment, and the principal features became fixed, receiving ecclesiastical sanction at the Council of Florence (1439) and again in final form at the Council of Trent (Session XIV, 1551).

The Roman Church today claims that the "proper

(1) Cf. discussion in Catholic Encyclopedia, V, 729

(2) Trent, Sess. XIV, cap. iii; cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, V, 726, 729

(3) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 269

ministers" of this sacrament are the priests of the Church alone (bishops a fortiori); the subjects are Christians (infants excepted), who by the use of reason have been capable of penance, and due to illness are in danger of death. The matter of the sacrament is divided into two concepts, the remote and the proximate. The remote matter is the consecrated oil, which is pure olive oil without mixture, though in the Eastern Church a little water is added as a symbol of baptism, a little wine in memory of the Good Samaritan, and in some cases a little ashes or dust from the sepulchre of some saint. The oil must be blessed on Maundy Thursday, a privilege limited to the bishop in the Western Church, but not so in the Greek Church.(1) This "oleum infirmorum" must be kept separate from the "oleum catechumenorum" -- any admixture might cause a defect of matter, and render the sacrament void. The proximate matter of extreme unction is the unction with the consecrated oil. Aquinas thought it was essential to anoint the five organs of sense (2), but this is denied today by precept and practice; one anointing is sufficient.

The form of the sacrament is the ritual or prayer-form, spoken by the priest or priests, usually including the simple indicative statement, "I anoint thee with sanctified oil in the name of the Trinity, that thou mayest be saved forever and ever." (3) The purpose and principal effect of the sacrament is the remission of sins, but only those which are

(1) Episcopal consecration is declared by Aquinas as "conveniens" -- the Pope may grant power to an ordinary priest to consecrate.

(2) Aquinas, Summa, Supplem. Q. xxxii, art. 6

(3) Seeberg, Dogmen. III, 496; Cath. Encycl. V, 725

venial (1) -- mortal sins having been removed in penance. Hence this sacrament of extreme unction was looked upon as completing the sacrament of penance; and Aquinas quite logically discusses extreme unction immediately following penance, showing in this way their association. (2) As to the necessity of this sacrament of extreme unction, we note that the language of the Church and of her theologians is cautiously framed, yet the obvious conclusion which comes to the average person when he reads the words of the Council of Trent is that it is necessary, since "contempt of so great a sacrament cannot take place without an enormous crime and an injury to the Holy Ghost Himself." (3)

This brief survey of the history of extreme unction should be sufficient to prove that the Schoolmen accepted the current practices of the Church, founded or unfounded, and then tried to fit a dogmatic theory to them to justify their existence and continuance. The medieval sacraments were not the outgrowth of a definite belief in the Church, but rather the faith of the Church was often shaped to fit the existing practice. Unction simply grew out of the need of something objective to increase confidence in the souls of the dying. (4)

In coming to Wyclif's position concerning this sacrament we are not surprised to find him holding it in light esteem. It is true that he does not have a great deal to say about this "last sacrament" (5), but a brief chapter of less than two pages is devoted to it in his Trialogus. Surely its presence in Wyclif's writings fails to justify the complete ignoring of extreme

(1) Seeberg, Dogmen. III, 274, 496

(2) Aquinas, Summa, Penance, III, Q. lxxxiv to Suppl. Q. xxviii; Extreme Unction, Suppl. Q. xxix-xxxiii

(3) Trent, Sess. XIV, cap. iii

(4) Cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 270, and notes.

(5) Trialogus, IV, Cap. XXV, 333

unction by Principal Workman, Prof. Dyson Hague, Bishop Wordsworth, E. S. Holt, R. Vaughan, and others, especially since they treat specifically of the other six sacraments. (1) And Dr. Lechler and Canon Pennington are content to dispose of this sacrament with a passing sentence! (2)

In focussing his attention upon this sacrament Wyclif makes it clear at the outset that the foundation upon which it rests (James 5:14-15) is not adequate; for the Apostle did not specify a final illness involving danger of death; he might have meant any sickness.

"Ista videtur nimis levis fundatio sacramenti, cum fidelis posset dicere satis probabiliter, quod iste sanctus apostolus non specificat infirmitatem finalem, sed consolationem faciendam a presbytero, dum aliquis infirmatur." (3)

The fact that the oil promotes the health of the body is cited as a reason for the inclusion of this passage in James -- even custom in that part of the world might further justify its appearance here. (4) The Reformer's rejection of the "ex opere operato" view of the matter of the sacrament is seen when he says that the oil does not affect the soul, although the prayer of a devout priest does have a healing effect, and God heals or helps the infirmity of the soul. (5)

This unction is definitely not a sacrament in the high sense of the term, though it is admitted that Wyclif lists it with the sacraments of the Church through a regard for custom.

- (1) Workman discusses confirmation, penance, Eucharist, orders and marriage; omits baptism and unction.
- (2) Lechler, 335; Pennington, 258. A brief discussion of Wyclif's view of unction does occur in Böhlinger, Johannes von Wykliffe, etc., "Die letzte Oelung", 396-398; and Lewald, Zeitschrift für historische Theologie, 1847, 635-636.
- (3) Trialogus, IV, XXV, 333-334
- (4) Ibid., IV, XXV, 334
- (5) Ibid., IV, XXV, 334

If, however, it were truly a sacrament, then Christ and his apostles would have done more towards making it known.

"Si enim ista corporalis unction foret sacramentum, ut modo fingitur, Christi et ejus apostoli ejus promulgationem et executionem debitam non tacerent." (1)

His position in this regard is a little inconsistent, for in the following sentence he concedes that to some individuals this bodily unction may be a sacrament, "in which case it is then necessary that the presbyters should heal the sick with their devout prayers"! Despite his rejection of unction as a sacrament in the highest sense of the term, Wyclif cautions all not to take the Apostle's words too lightly, which shows his extreme consistency in his high regard for the words of Holy Writ.

Wyclif is of the opinion that the prayer of the priest for a sick man is not sufficient to remove his sins. The Reformer voices his predestinarian views by claiming that many thus anointed have been doomed to everlasting punishment. With irony he points out that if the sacrament of unction can really accomplish all that the Church claims for it, in the complete removal of remaining guilt, then it becomes the most necessary of all for salvation ("summe necessarium inter omnia sacramenta"), since those who have partaken of the other sacraments may die impenitent, and therefore be lost. So may he die, says Wyclif, who has received this last sacrament. (2)

Unauthorized ceremonies have crept into the Church to be recognized above certain things essential to the faith,

(1) Trialogus, IV, XXV, 334
(2) Ibid., IV, XXV, 334

asserts the Reformer; and he believes that unction is one of these useless ceremonies, far inferior in importance, for example, to the seven works of spiritual mercy. God saves many without extreme unction, and it is blasphemy and a presumption of Antichrist for priests to require it to be received as though it were necessary for salvation.

"Unde videtur mihi singulos, qui instituunt tales privatos ordines et dant generaliter regulas, ut talia sacramenta universaliter a subditis sint accepta, in Deum blasphemare, specialiter cum Deus vult salvare multos sine acceptione hujusmodi sacramenti. Quae ergo antichristiana praesumptio, prelatum asserere et infundabiliter confirmare, quod nemo salvabitur sine acceptione hujusmodi sacramenti!" (1)

The Reformer closes the chapter by mentioning problems which indicate the uncertainty connected with the sacrament in his day -- e.g., whether the priest ought to have certain knowledge that the individual so anointed will not survive, and the problem of the repetition of the sacrament. These questions it is useless to discuss, he feels, and so leaves them for the weak to propound. Actually in the last sentence he answers the problem of repetition, which so many doubted as permissible, when he asserts that probably it should not be repeated:

".... unum asserens a mihi probabili, quod sic infirmatus et unctus ac postmodum in corpore convalescens, cum vivit tempus posterius, non tunc recipit sacramentum ultimum unctionis." (2)

We realize the grave dangers involved in employing the argument of silence -- yet the fact that nowhere in his

(1) Trialogus IV, XXV, 335
 (2) Ibid., IV, XXV, 335

writings, except in the Trialogus, does Wyclif discuss this sacrament (the other sacraments are discussed in various works, both Latin and English) is proof that the Reformer considered extreme unction only worthy to be ignored, and its value as insignificant, if not entirely lacking.

SUMMARY: We have thus seen that Wyclif's position concerning extreme unction was anti-Roman and Protestant in that he held it was scripturally unwarranted to be called a sacrament; that its origin arose from custom; that the oil has no spiritual value; that sins are not forgiven by this external rite; that it is not necessary, but a useless, objective, ceremony; and that a priest's prayers cannot save a man in the last moments of life, for if this were true men might live dissolute lives and receive at the end full forgiveness through this sacrament. The very fact that the Commission of 1395 (1), appointed by Richard, and after it the Council of Constance, condemned Wyclif's interpretation of extreme unction is further proof of the Reformer's protesting(Protestant) position in this connection.

- (1) This commission examined the Trialogus, and condemned eighteen articles, article 14 being the one referring to extreme unction. Cf. Workman, II, 344. Böhlinger dates the commission 1396.

CHAPTER TEN

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

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No other sacrament in the history of the Christian Church has occasioned so much controversy, involving varying shades of opinion in interpretation, as has the sacrament of the Eucharist. Consequently any discussion of its history must detain us longer than a similar discussion of another sacrament, but we shall endeavor to be as brief as a cursory treatment of the subject will permit.

The name "Eucharist" is an ancient title, derived from the Greek *εὐχαριστία* (thanksgiving), and appears to have had its origin in the thanksgiving pronounced over the bread and the cup by Christ at the Last Supper.(1) Many names have been employed (2) -- the extensive nomenclature being proof of the sacrament's high position in the Church, and of its diverse interpretations -- but the ancient title which appears as early as the works of Ignatius, Justin, and Irenaeus, has taken precedence in the technical terminology of the Church, both in the East and in the West. There can be little doubt that in early times the Eucharist was the center of common worship, although it is extremely difficult to know to what extent it was employed in worship. In popular belief and practice the elements may have been more and more identified with the sacred realities which they signify, yet the language of the earliest Church Fathers, though ambiguous in places, is definite enough to show that the bread and wine were not commonly recognized as becoming the body

(1) Mk. 14:22f; Mt. 26:27; Lk. 22:17-19; I Cor. 11:24;
Cf. *Encycl. of Rel. and Ethics*, V, 540 f.

(2) E.g. Lord's Supper, Communion, Table of the Lord, Lord's Body, Holy of Holies, Blessed Sacrament -- and some now with altered meanings, such as Agape, Eulogia, Synaxis.

and the blood of our Lord, though unquestionably great reverence was accorded these material symbols.(1) Tertullian speaks of the bread as "figura corporis", and "panem quo ipsum corpus suum repraesentat";(2) Cyprian says that the blood of Christ is "shown forth in the wine"(3); the words "symbols" (ἀντίτυπα; σύμβολων; χάριν; σύμβολα), "likeness" (ὁμοίωμα), "figura", "repraesentare", etc. were often employed to indicate that the leaders of the patristic period, and later, interpreted the elements as means of grace which signify, rather than sanctify (4). However, it is well that we should understand more of what they meant by a symbol. Harnack tells us, in speaking of the patristic period:

"... what we now-a-days understand by a 'symbol' is a thing which is not that which it represents; at that time 'symbol' denoted a thing which, in some kind of way, really is what it signifies; but, on the other hand, according to the ideas of that period, the really heavenly element lay either in or behind the visible form without being identical with it." (5)

In Augustine clarity is not found, for he seems to give evidence in favor of both views (6), yet in the end he opposes superstitious reverence of the elements; and to take the sign for the thing signified he terms a "servilis infirmitas" (7). Yet in all fairness we must recognize that a purely symbolical conception of the sacrament, in our modern sense, is to be

- (1) Hastings, Encycl. of Rel. and Ethics, V, 549.
Some of the Fathers, however, seem to make the elements the body and blood. See Schaff, Church History, II, 242.
- (2) Adv. Marcion, iii, 19; and Adv. Marcion, i, 14
- (3) Ep. lxi, 2--"Christi sanguis ostenditur", etc.
- (4) Stone, History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, I, 64.
- (5) Harnack, History of Dogma, II, 144
- (6) Cf. Stone, (op.cit.) I, 65, 82-84; and 91-96
- (7) Augustine "De Trinit. iii, 10 (from Hagenbach, History of Doctrine, II, 85)

found practically nowhere in ancient times.(1)

Out of the maze of spiritual, mystical, and allegorical interpretations of the patristic period (2), with all their confusion -- the mysterious and bombastic rhetoric of the Fathers both in the East and in the West makes it exceedingly difficult to decide with certainty what dogmatic notions are to be attached to their expressions -- we find emerging the first traces of a new development in Cyril of Jerusalem (3) about the fourth century. He introduces the conception of a mysterious change in the elements, brought about by the Holy Spirit, which change was expressed by the verb *μεταβάλλειν* (literally, to throw in a different position, to turn quickly, to alter). Here is suggested the heightened efficacy of the elements, which may also be seen in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, and probably by implication in Cyril of Alexandria (4). Cyril of Jerusalem does not develop the doctrine, though there is a conversion of some kind illustrated by Christ's changing the water into wine. Gregory expounds the same idea in an original way by saying that as the Incarnate Word received nourishment by bread and wine which later became His body and blood, so immediately (instead of in the process of time) the elements upon consecration become the body and blood of the Lord.(5) The recognition of transformed (*μεταμορφωθείς*) elements is seen in later writers, as in Chrysostom (known as the Doctor of the Eucharist), Ambrose (6), Hilary, etc. -- and

- (1) Harnack, History of Dogma, IV, 289, note 2.
- (2) Clement, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, etc.
- (3) In Catecheses Mystagogicae
- (4) Stone, Hist.of Doct.of Holy Eucharist, I, 67 f.
- (5) Oratio Catech. c. 37 -- Cf. Catholic Encycl., V, 577
- (6) In Ambrose the idea changed from East to West. He expressed the change by the verb "transfigurare". Hastings, Hist, of Doctrine, V, 551

the language of conversion is common, though it does not as yet succeed in imposing itself upon the West. Jerome says that the bread "shows forth" the body of the Savior; and that the Eucharist is a "memorial of redemption".(1) In fact, we can see that wherever a metabolic view is presented concerning the Eucharist, there is alongside of it a corresponding symbolic view to be found; that some writers are led to think of an ideal change in the sacrament, and others of a substantial change; some hold to a subjective change on the part of the recipient, and others to an objective change in the thing received; and eventually (though hardly in this period) some find in the Eucharist a mystical conjunction of the bread and body of our Lord (consubstantiation), while others find a total change in the eucharistic elements into His body and blood, (transubstantiation).

In this same period there may be seen early indications of a developing view of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, although Dr. Harnack thinks that up to the time of Cyprian the Church contented itself with purely spiritual sacrifices of adoration and thanksgiving.(2) Justin Martyr (3), followed by Origen and Cyprian, associated sacrificial ideas with the words "Do this in remembrance of Me", and the memorial came to be recognized as a propitiatory one, like the Passover memorial of the Old Testament. Such sacrificial terms as "altar" and "priest" were employed in a Christian sense, and used to a great degree by Cyprian in North Africa, and by Origen in the East. Later

(1) Ep. 98:13; also cf. Comm. in Tit., i, 8,9. (from Stone, op. cit., I, 97.

(2) Cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, X, 10

(3) Dialogue with Tryphon, c. 117

Cyril of Jerusalem and Chrysostom carry on the developing idea with language that abounds in sacrificial terminology (1).

Liturgical development, no doubt, played its part in helping to establish this conception of the Eucharist, with certain opinions of individuals becoming crystallized into the expressions of the Church manuals (2).

Following the patristic period the two main tendencies in eucharistic development continued to be accentuated, namely, the trend toward identifying the elements with that which they signify, and the trend toward the idea of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. These made progress despite the honor accorded to the authority of Augustine. Great bitterness developed in the Monophysite controversy, where much analogy was employed between the Incarnation and the Eucharist, and where the Monophysites, by blending the divine with the human, promoted anthropomorphism under the mask of Christian orthodoxy (3). This resulted in a temporary division between the East and the West for some thirty-five years, beginning in 484 A.D. In the East the doctrine of the conversion of the elements was more and more recognized as the accepted teaching, and by the eighth century this view is set forth by John of Damascus as the established doctrine of the Church (4). In the West Ambrose and Augustine are the leading figures, representing two different currents of thought. The former stands for the doctrine of conversion; the latter, while not maintaining a purely symbolical view of the Eucharist, insists on the sharp distinction between the thing and the thing signified.

(1) Hastings Encycl., V, 552; Cath. Encycl. X, 10-11

(2) Hastings Encycl., V, 552-553

(3) Hagenbach, History of Doctrines, II, 27

(4) De Fide Orthodoxa, iv, 13

Likewise, these same two streams of thought, the Ambrosian and the Augustinian, may be followed in the West in the conception of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. Augustine's emphasis is more upon the union of the faithful with the sacrifice of Christ; and by partaking of the body and blood of the Savior, the faithful themselves are the sacrifice, and thus become the body of Christ.(1) But over against this view Ambrose claims that Christ Himself is offered when the body of Christ in the Eucharist is offered; and that He stands by to be our Advocate with an abiding intercession (2). Gregory the Great in the sixth century reproduces Ambrose's thought in its mystical and transcendental setting, uniting in the Eucharist both the heavenly and the earthly, and emphasizing the renewal of Christ's passion (3). From such a concept a propitiatory value was ascribed to this sacrifice; intercessory prayers began to be offered after the consecration of the elements; and the language of the sacramentaries of the Church is soon changed from the older form, "the sacrifice of praise", to read "the sacrifice of propitiation and praise". (4)

At this point -- the beginning of the seventh century -- we are justified in leaving the Eastern Church to turn our attention to the Western, for as Stone has so clearly pointed out, "In the East the history of the eucharistic doctrine is for the most part untouched by controversy".(5) But not so in the West; the main battles were yet to come. A certain restlessness among theologians may be seen throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, as if preparing for the fray, but the occasion for open

- (1) De Civ. Dei, X,6,20; XXII,10; and Serm. CCXXVII
- (2) In Psalm xxxviii, 25; De Officiis, I,xlviii,238;
Cf. Hastings Encycl., V, 552, 555
- (3) Dial. iv, 58 (Cf. Stone, I, 194-196)
- (4) Hastings Encycl., V, 555
- (5) Stone, (op. cit.) I, 193

hostility did not come until the middle of the ninth century. The first great controversy was launched by the appearance of the treatise "Liber de Corpore et Sangune Domini", written by the Corbey monk, Paschasius Radbertus, in 844 (1), and addressed to the Emperor Charles, the Bald. With Ambrose for his pattern, this monk gave the most complete treatment of the Eucharist that had yet appeared, a work which was characterized by a profoundly religious spirit, and which maintained the conversion theory and the identity of the eucharistic elements with the historical body of Christ. The author treated the problem of the Eucharist mystically instead of metaphysically, making much of the alleged miracles where the true body of Christ had appeared to convince those who doubted, even to the perception of stains of blood. There is a touch of the idea of the spiritual presence of Christ in the sacrament, yet the characteristic position of the East is maintained, that at consecration the elements are wholly and substantially converted into the body and blood of Christ, so that after consecration they do not truly and properly continue to exist as bread and wine (2). The Eucharist is also regarded as a sacrifice by Paschasius (3), in which position he was essentially supported by Rabanus Maurus, (4), who, in spite of this similarity, differed widely from the views of Paschasius.

But Augustine's influence was too strong to let this treatise of Paschasius go unchallenged. Another monk of Corbey,

- (1) Hagenbach dates it between 830 and 832 (II, 338), but the date of 844 is that of the revised edition. Cf. Stone, I, 217
- (2) Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, III, 70-71; and Stone, I, 217-221
- (3) De Corp. et Sang. Dom., viii, 1, 2; ix, 1, 2.
- (4) Cf. Stone, I, 222-226

Ratramnus, at the request of the King, wrote a treatise against Paschasius' position, which he entitled "De Corpore et Sanguine Domini ad Carolum Calvum". The two problems treated in this work are: (a) Is the Eucharist the body of Christ in a mystery or in reality?; and (b) What is the relation of the eucharistic body to the historical body? In his attempt to answer these, the old ambiguity of the West is apparent (as in Augustine) and it is difficult to know whether he maintains a real or a spiritual presence (1). He does, however, make a distinction between the eucharistic body and the historic body of Christ, born of a virgin, crucified and buried. The elements are the "pledge" and the "image" of the verity of Christ's body and blood, but not the verity itself, for the reality of His true body will be made manifest only in the hereafter (2). This work of Ratramnus is of great importance in the history of eucharistic doctrine, for it not only influenced many of the ninth century, but it also had a marked influence on Berengar in the eleventh century, and was held in high esteem by Bishop Ridley in the reforming period of the sixteenth, thereby affecting the doctrines of the Church of England (3).

The second great eucharistic controversy was waged in the eleventh century largely between Berengar of Tours and Lanfranc -- and this is of great importance for our purpose, because its memory was still fresh in Wyclif's day, and Wyclif made many references to Berengar and his position in regard to the Eucharist. The teachings of Paschasius had no doubt gained

(1) Stone, I, 227-228. Excellent quotations given here.

(2) De Corp. et Sang. Dom., 86, 87 (from quotations in Stone, I, 232)

(3) Stone, I, 233; and II, 184

the ascendancy in the West during the ninth and tenth centuries, but the influence of Augustine and Ratramnus was by no means extinguished. Berengar (c. 1000-1088), head of the school of Tours, had refused to accept the teachings of Paschasius, and was inclined to favor the views of John Scotus in regard to the sacrament of the altar. Stone has this to say concerning the views influencing Berengar:

"By 'the opinions of John the Scot' Berengar probably meant the views expressed either in the treatise of Ratramm 'On the body and blood of the Lord', which may by this time have come to be ascribed to Scotus Erigena, or in a work maintaining a similar position actually written by Scotus and now lost." (1)

In 1050, inspired by friends and foes, Berengar addressed a letter to Lanfranc, then Prior of Bec (he afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury), in which he made it plain that he rejected the views of Paschasius (2), and accepted those of John the Scot, saying:

"If you regard John as a heretic, whose opinions of the Eucharist I approve, you ought to hold as heretics Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, not to mention others." (3)

So heretical was this letter considered that Berengar was condemned unheard at Rome and Vercelli in the same year. But later in 1054 he persuaded Hildebrand of his orthodoxy, and was in 1059 in Rome either permitted or compelled to subscribe to a confession, framed by Cardinal Humbert, concerning the sacrament (4). The contents of the document, important for our purpose because of Wyclif's many references to it, we quote in full:

"I, Berengar, the unworthy deacon of the Church of St. Maurice, Angers, perceiving the

(1) Stone, (op. cit.), I, 245

(2) Cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 47

(3) Migne, 150, 63c. (From MacDonald, Berengar and the Reform of the Sacramental Doctrine, 54)

(4) Stone, I, 246-247

true and Apostolic Faith, anathematize all heresy, especially that of which up to this point I am publicly accused, which attempts to maintain that bread and wine placed on the altar, after consecration, are only a sacrament, and not the true body and true blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and cannot in the sacrament only be perceptibly (sensualiter) touched or broken by the hands of the priest, or ground by the teeth of the faithful. Moreover, I agree with the Holy Roman and Apostolic See, and with my mouth and heart profess to hold that belief in the Sacrament of the Lord's Table, which the Lord and venerable Pope Nicholas and this holy Synod, by evangelical and apostolical authority delivered and confirmed to me; namely that the bread and the wine which are placed on the altar, after consecration are not only a sacrament, but the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and perceptibly (sensualiter) not only in the sacrament, but in reality (in veritate) are touched and broken by the hands of the priest and ground by the teeth of the faithful." (1)

Berengar did not sign the confession, but merely read it aloud, later being compelled to burn certain of his writings. Lanfranc held that his reading the oath was equivalent to swearing it, but Berengar later maintained that it was done under compulsion, and therefore not conscientiously sworn, but accepted only in silence (2). Catholic and Protestant writers today agree in the crude, materialized conception of the sacrament in Humbert's formula, which is described by one authority as a "confession so grossly material, and so devoid of spiritual insight and evangelical feeling as this terrible statement ..." (3). Harnack shows that this "coarse view" is away from the true tradition and from the Church Fathers, and the prevailing superstition was incompatible with the mystery of the sacrament because in it all takes place "vere et sensualiter". (4)

(1) Quoted from MacDonald (op. cit.), 130-131, and given by Lanfranc in Migne's "Patrologia Latina". Cf. Stone, I, 247

(2) Cf. MacDonald, 130-131 (including notes); also Stone, I, 247

(3) MacDonald, 131; Cf. Hastings Encycl., V, 557

(4) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 47, and notes.

Berengar's letter having opened the controversy, Lanfranc replied in a treatise "De Corpore et Sanguine Domini" (1066-1068); and in answer to this Berengar gave a fuller view of his position in "De Sacra Coena adv. Lanfrancum" (about 1073) (1), which is largely a return to the old Western position, with appeals to Augustine, Ambrose, and others, and including a somewhat thorough exegesis of the Fathers. A distinctive feature is the use of dialectic, reasoning against the conversion theory on the ground that accidents cannot exist without a subject -- the first appearance of an argument which Wyclif was later to employ freely, and with telling effect. Strong language condemned the Pope, the Church, and all who followed the paths of error. Yet Berengar, due to a personal acquaintance with the Pope, was treated leniently for his dissenting views, but was finally compelled in the Synod of Rome (1079) to subscribe again to a transmutation doctrine, much broader than the first confession -- an act which MacDonald calls "the surrender of religious enlightenment by the great Pope to political expediency".(2) The essence of the work is a development of Augustinian symbolism, rather than Ambrosian realism, for Berengar clearly denies any destruction of the elements, or any material change in them.(3) His teachings were charged with denying a real presence of Christ in the sacrament; some thought he held merely

(1) MacDonald dates it before Aug. 26, 1070 when Lanfranc was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury -- *ibid.* 155 n., 162 n. It was probably written not only against Lanfranc, but with other attacks on the author's position in mind, e.g. those of Hugh of Langres (Stone, I, 245 f), Durandus of Troarn (Stone, I, 250-252) and Witmund of Aversa (*ibid.* I, 252-254; MacDonald, 172 f.)

(2) MacDonald (*op. cit.*), 194, and note.

(3) *Ibid.*, 170-171; Stone (*op. cit.*), I, 254-256

a figurative view of Christ's presence (1); others thought he taught a view of impanation. Perhaps his chief contribution to eucharistic thought is that of turning the rising Scholasticism from the cruder, untenable conceptions which were current -- e.g. physical manducation, reception by the wicked, incorruptibility of the consecrated species -- to a more complete formulation of the conversion theory, which is seen later in the dogma of transubstantiation (2).

Following the second great eucharistic controversy the doctrinal development of this sacrament was noticeably influenced by two great movements of the age -- the religious revival, resulting both from the reform of the papacy and the powerful factors of the Crusades; and the intellectual revival, which is seen later in the Schoolmen, as well as in Dante and the Humanists. Rashdall says:

"The first indication of the re-awakening of the European mind after its long slumber is the denial of the popular superstition by Berengar of Tours". (3)

The methods of Berengar in employing dialectic reasoning concerning the Eucharist were later to be applied to the entire number of the Church's sacraments, and the emphases of the Schoolmen were thus to be upon the metaphysical instead of upon the mystical. The proponents of nominalism and of realism drew swords for the fray, with much reliance upon Aristotle for support of their conflicting views. From the twelfth century onward metaphysical language was applied to the Eucharist, with a keen

- (1) Harnack holds that Berengar rejected the symbolical interpretation. History of Dogma, VI, 49-50
- (2) A good outline of Berengar's eucharistic doctrine appears in Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, III, 197-199
- (3) Rashdall, Universities of Europe in Middle Ages, I, 46.

distinction being made between "substantia" and "accidentia"; the former denoted "the impalpable universal which was held to inhere in every particular included under it", while the latter denoted the "sensible properties which came into existence when the pure Form clothed itself in Matter". (1) This metaphysical distinction made it possible for a more refined view of the mode of the Sacramental Presence to be held, and as the doctrine developed away from the crude, materialistic view, the conversion of the elements came to be known in the twelfth century as "transubstantiation" -- which means that the "substantia" of the bread and wine, as a result of the priestly consecration, pass into the "substantia" of the body and blood of Christ, while the "accidentia" of both remain the same as before consecration.

In this doctrinal development we can see the growing favor of realism and the decline of nominalism, for in realism the theologians found supplied a much-needed philosophical dress for their cherished doctrines of orthodoxy, and consequently nearly all the theological assertions of the Schoolmen were of a more or less realistic cast. Transubstantiation became well grounded in the West; it agreed with the current philosophy of the day, it provided a conversion of the elements which popular religion demanded, and it minimized the cruder materialistic concepts of an earlier period. The Lateran Council (1215) framed the medieval doctrine of transubstantiation as dogma -- at least the term "transubstantiation" received the official sanction of the Church -- and stated that in the Euch-

(1) Rashdall, Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, I, 47

arist "Jesus Christ is at once priest and sacrifice, whose body and blood are truly (veraciter) contained in the sacrifice of the altar under the appearance of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into the body, and the wine into the blood by divine power,(1) so that for the effecting of the mystery of unity we receive of His what He received of ours".(2) Here is the connecting link between the Eucharist and the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation, for the thing becomes the thing signified -- and thus the sacrament came to be the chiefest of all the seven recognized by the Church, since it gave expression to everything which the Church highly prized -- e.g. the mystical relation and union with Christ, the fellowship of believers, the priestly power, the sacrifice, the miraculous power committed to the Church, etc. And as Harnack goes on to express it, the sacrament gave "the satisfaction of the sensuous impulse in piety, etc., only not the faith which seeks for certainty and to which certainty is given".(3) The Church felt that the Eucharist was the only perfect sacrament, since in it the "res" and the "sacramentum" coincide, both the incarnation and the death of Christ are represented as operative because repeated in the Eucharist, and the past, present, and future are all embraced in this one mystery.(4) By its observance intensity of devotion was increased and it was considered the mystery par excellence of the Church.

(1) The words are "transubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina".

(2) Conc. Lat., IV, c.1- quoted from Harnack, (op.cit.) VI, 53; Stone, I, 313; Hagenbach, II, 348-349; Hastings Encycl. V, 559

(3) Harnack, VI, 233-234

(4) Cf. Wyclif's high opinions of it- De Eucharistia, 87

With all this prominence accorded it by the faithful, it is only natural that a full metaphysical analysis of the Eucharist should be given by the theologians of the scholastic period, and this finds its fullest expression in Thomas Aquinas (1), much of whose analysis Wyclif was destined to accept, and much to reject, as we shall see. The definite and complete doctrine of transubstantiation was confirmed at the Council of Trent in its thirteenth session (1551), and marks the final refutation of Berengarianism by the Roman Church.

This is not the proper place for an exposition of Aquinas on the Eucharist -- that is a study in itself -- but a few sentences concerning his position should help us as we approach more specifically the scholastic doctrine of this sacrament. Aquinas held that the whole Christ was present in each particle of both species, (2) the body by concomitance is present in the species of the wine, and the blood by concomitance is present in the species of the bread. This view came to be accepted as a guard against the abhorred idea of a "portiuncula carnis" (3), and eventually led to the withdrawal of the cup from the laity. Transubstantiation is neither an annihilation nor a continuance of substance; accidents remain without their subject, which is a miraculous working of the first cause without the intervention of the secondary causes; the body is broken only according to the sacramental species; the accidents

(1) Aquinas, Summa Theologia, III, Q. 73-82, art. 6

(2) This was not new, having been a settled belief from the time of Peter the Lombard. Cf. Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 76, art. 1, 2; also Harnack, VI, 240

(3) Cf. Hastings Encycl., V, 559

are corruptible, capable of imparting nourishment, etc., but the real body of Christ cannot be broken, is incorruptible and impassible, and whole under every part of the sacrament.(1) Aquinas, with others of his day, tended to allow greater reality to the accidents than had hitherto been accorded them. The body of Christ is present not locally or dimensionally, but as a substantial quality -- a distinction which was really a spaceless presence, a view which maintained that "existence in space does not belong to the essence of things that appear in space"(2)-- which is a step away from realism toward nominalism. Aquinas continued to be a moderate realist -- too moderate for Wyclif, who could not countenance the thought of accidents existing without a subject! Aquinas deals not only with the eucharistic presence and gift, but also with the sacrifice (3), strongly expressing that in this sacrament something is done to appease God, and that as a satisfaction it takes away penalty which is due for sin.(4)

Historically, the consequences of the scholastic doctrine of transubstantiation were manifold, some of the most important results being (a) the discontinuance of child communion, due to the elaborate ideas of the content of the sacrament and the danger of the awkward handling of the consecrated elements; (b) the increased dignity and alleged power of the priests, by whom Christ was daily and magically produced and offered; (c) the withholding of the cup from the laity, which grew out of the

(1) Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 76, art. 4-7; Stone, I, 329-330

(2) Hagenbach, II, 349; Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 76, art. 4

(3) Summa, III, Q. 79, art. 1-7

(4) Cf. Stone's excellent discussion in his History of the Doctrine of Holy Eucharist, I, 323-328

theory of concomitance, and the possible dangers of spilling the converted wine; and (d) the adoration of the elevated host, which was established more firmly than ever in the feast of Corpus Christi (1264; again in 1311). (1)

We turn now to a brief examination of the scholastic doctrine of the Eucharist as to matter, form, minister, effects, necessity, etc. (2) The matter was divided into the remote and the proximate; the remote matter was the material elements of bread and wine, while the proximate matter was the eucharistic appearances under which the body and blood of Christ were said to be truly present. The bread was wheaten bread (*panis triticeus*), and had to be baked -- otherwise a defect in the sacrament would occur. Bread from barley, rye, oats, etc. was not acceptable. (3) Aquinas makes use of the ancient symbolism of the bread, where many grains become one bread. (4) The controversy as to the use of leavened or unleavened bread was not fully settled between the East and the West until the Decree of Union at Florence, 1439, though Rome adhered to unleavened bread, and the East largely to the leavened. The second element, the wine, was the juice of the grape (*vinum de vite*) -- no other fruit juice or liquid could validly be used, although it was permissible, and indeed the custom, to add a little water to the wine. This practice was based on the ancient Roman and Jewish customs of dilution (5), and upon the deep symbolical meaning inasmuch as both blood and water flowed from Christ's side on the cross. Strangely enough, the question of the

(1) Harnack, VI, 240-241

(2) Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, III, 464-475

(3) Cf. Wyclif's *De Blasphemia*, 250

(4) *Summa Theologia*, III, Q. 74, art. 1

(5) Proverbs 9:2; and 9:5

fermentation of the bread -- Azymites versus Prozymites -- was in this general period a greater problem than that of the fermentation of the wine! (1)

The form of the sacrament is the words of consecration by the priest, spoken in the name of Christ, and not in the name of the administering person. The Western Church held that the words of institution when pronounced by the properly ordained priest possess the consecratory power to convert the elements into the actual body and blood of our Lord, while the Eastern Church clung to the Epikle/sis, and only by this calling upon the Holy Spirit to convert the elements was the priest able to consecrate the sacrament. Thus the two groups differed in their interpretation of the moment of consecration.(2) To the scholastics, ~~h~~herefore, the "forma" was not only the appeal to God -- in spite of Bonaventura and Duns Scotus -- that He should effect the change, but the words possessed the effectual power as soon as the priest intended the mystery of transubstantiation to be accomplished.(3)

The minister of the sacrament is the priest, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) confirming the ancient teaching that "no one but the priest, regularly ordained according to the keys of the Church, has the power of consecrating this sacrament."(4) The Council of Arles (314), forbade deacons to administer the Eucharist; and this was confirmed at the Council of Nicea (325). On the point of the valid minister of this sacrament Christendom is united.(5) The recipient is a "human being" -- a definition wherein the Church tried to side-step many

(1) Cf. Hagenbach, II, 362-363

(2) Stone, I, 84-88; Catholic Encycl., V, 585-586

(3) Harnack, VI, 235; Aquinas, Sentent. IV. Dist. 8, Q. 2, art. 3

(4) Harnack, VI, 53. (Conc. Lat. IV, c. 1)

(5) Cf. Stone, Outline of Christian Dogma, 176

metaphysical and theological difficulties-- excluding all irrational creatures, and even angels. The person receiving must be in a "state of pilgrimage" to the next world, thus excluding the early practice of giving Holy Communion to the dead; and the recipient must, of course, be baptized, for without baptism no other sacrament can be received.

The effects of the sacrament are union with Christ by love, and incorporation into His Church; and an increase of sanctifying grace in the soul of the worthy recipient, giving perseverance in faith, strengthening in human weakness, and the effect of "blotting out venial sin and preserving the soul from mortal sin".(1) The Eucharist was held to be both a nourishing food and a medicine, giving strength and healing to the soul. A further effect is seen in the "pledge of our glorious resurrection and eternal happiness".(2) Its effects extend beyond this earthly life, for as a sacrifice it was considered by the Church to have a bearing on the penalties in purgatory.

The necessity of the sacrament is of two kinds: necessity of means, and necessity of precept. Neither of these apply to infants, who, if baptized, may be saved without the Eucharist. Though the absolute necessity is not claimed for adults, the relative and moral necessity is-- and the Lateran Council in this connection set forth the obligation of the faithful that both sexes were to commune at least once a year, and this during the paschal season.(3) Strangely enough, this legislative act contributed unintentionally to the growing infrequency

(1) Trent. Sess. XIII, cap. ii; Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 79, art. 4

(2) Trent. Sess. XIII, cap. ii; Cath. Encycl. V, 587-588

(3) Cf. Aquinas, Summa, III, Q. 80, art. 10, where he says this ordinance was due chiefly to the "reign of impiety and the growing cold of charity".

of communion, yet this prescription was solemnly reiterated by the Council of Trent.(1) The necessity of communion in both kinds could not be maintained with the theory of concomitance in transubstantiation -- hence the gradual withdrawal of the cup from the laity in one section after another until the doctrine became fixed in the Council of Constance.

We turn now to a consideration of the dissenting voices raised against transubstantiation -- and so come to Wyclif. It is only natural that a few individuals ventured to dissent from, or at least to modify, the newly-established doctrine of the Church in regard to the Eucharist. In Rupert of Deutz (?-1135) we see one who returned to the earlier patristic teaching, drew a parallel between the two natures of Christ and the earthly and divine elements in the sacrament, and denied, like Berengar, any disturbance of the sensible elements.(2) In his wake came John of Paris (? - 1306), who stressed the scholastic view of impanation, which denied the reality of Christ's bodily presence on the altar, the "corporeitas panis" forming a union with the "corporeitas Christi" -- a view which was more materialistic, and therefore more repulsive, than transubstantiation, though it attempted to solve the difficulties as to the capacity of corruption and the power of nourishing the body remaining in the consecrated elements.(3) And after him we see William of Ockham (1280-1347) who, with John of Paris, anticipated the Lutheran doctrine of Christ's real presence in the bread when he inferred, despite his desire for orthodoxy (4), that Christ

(1) Trent, Sess. XIII, can. 9; Cf. Cath. Encycl. V, 588

(2) Hagenbach, II, 358; Stone, I, 291-295

(3) Stone, I, 361-363; Hagenbach, II, 358; Harnack, VI, 239, n.

(4) He says: "Hic est et mea fides quantum est catholica fides. Quicquid enim Romana ecclesia credit hoc solum et non aliud vel explicite credo." - De Sacramento Altaris, cap. I. And yet his attempt to demonstrate an intuitive belief actually brought him out of the pathway of strict ecclesiastical orthodoxy, which he thought he was following.

could co-exist with the substance of bread as well as with the accidents of bread, very much as the soul can co-exist with every part of the body. Ockham also acknowledged the impossibility of proving the doctrine of transubstantiation from Scripture, nothing being found in Scripture on the question that the substance of the bread does not remain after consecration. The ubiquity of Christ's body is not the foundation of his doctrine, it is rather the consequence of his doctrine (1); and the way was partly prepared by it for the later Lutheran view.

But the greatest of all medieval opponents of the Church's doctrine of the Eucharist, especially in regard to transubstantiation, was John Wyclif. Lechler says of him:

"His (Wyclif's) attack upon the dogma of Transubstantiation was one so concentrated, and delivered from so many sides, that the scholastic conception was shaken to its very foundations. The animated strife which was directed against Wycliffe, and the strong measures which were taken by the hierarchy against him and his party, are the loudest testimonies to the importance of the attack that called forth this resistance." (2)

Like Ockham, Wyclif felt that on the grounds of reason alone the permanence of the substances of the bread and wine was not improbable; and unlike Ockham he rejected the decisions of the Church in regard to transubstantiation, and asserted boldly that the real substance and character of the bread and wine remained unchanged on the altar after consecration.

The Church's view, against which Wyclif struggled so violently, was simply this -- that in the consecration by the priest the elements are magically changed, the whole substance

(1) Hagenbach, II, 358-360; Stone, I, 363-364;
Harnack, VI, 239 and note

(2) Lechler, John Wycliffe, etc., 359

of the bread departs, and the whole substance of Christ (true body and true blood with His soul and divine nature) takes its place, while the form and appearance (i.e. the accidents) of the bread remain. So with the wine. The body and the blood, the soul and divinity of our Lord, the entire Christ, exist equally in each species and in each particle of each species; and the elements thus consecrated and thus converted are to be worshipped with the same adoration that is paid to God Himself (*λατρεία*). In short, each priest of the Church has the power of creating Christ, of making his Maker.

With all the powers of his thorough and profound mind, with arguments scriptural, rational, experiential, analogical, dialectical and historical, Wyclif attacked the error of the Church in regard to this sacrament, and marshalled the sum total of his intellectual acumen to defend the earlier, simpler, more evangelical and more symbolical view of the Eucharist. His attack surpassed any work hitherto appearing in this field in its depth of insight, its spiritual emphasis, its support in Scripture, and in its shrewd, dialectical analysis.

We cannot reckon with exactness the true date when Wyclif's doubts on the Church's doctrine of the Eucharist began, but it was probably about 1370 when, as a sententiary at Oxford, he appeared to deviate from the path of strict orthodoxy by advancing a debatable doctrine.(1) It cannot be denied that he once held the Church's view in regard to transubstantiation, for he openly confesses:

"I frankly admit that I have long

(1) Workman, I, 97; and II, 34. Good discussions of this important problem also occur in English Historical Review, April, 1890, pp. 328-330; Loserth's Introduction to Wyclif's De Eucharistia, iii-ix.

been in error as regards the heresy of accidents without a subject." (1)

"And though I once took the utmost pains to explain transubstantiation in agreement with the sense of the early Church, yet I now see that the modern Church contradicts the Church of former times, and errs in this doctrine." (2)

His doubts of this doctrine probably began earlier than scholars usually indicate, though due to a lack of concrete evidence they dare not assign a specific date earlier than 1370. Yet we cannot ignore his words in a sermon, which state:

"For many years I sought to learn of ~~the~~ friars what the real presence of the consecrated host might be. They at length had the boldness to maintain that the host was nothing." (3)

The Reformer's sententiary treatise, "De Benedicta Incarnacione", is a work of strong, realistic exposition of the Person of Christ, and the author's alert mind must have been aware at this time of the inconsistency existing between realism and the doctrine of transubstantiation, although he probably was not aware whither the implications of his realism would eventually lead him. Unnoticed for a time, his early positions in this treatise were at last to be branded as heretical, and his book to be burned at Prague in 1410 by official command.(4) But it was not until the summer of 1379, (or 1380 at the very

- (1) Responsio ad argumenta, etc. in Polemical Works. How very much like Archbishop Cranmer, who later came to a similar conclusion, confessed in a similar statement: "I was in that error of the real presence as I was many years past in divers other errors as of transubstantiation, of the sacrifice propitiatory of the priests in the mass." Parker Society, Cranmer's "On the Lord's Supper, II, 215-6. Cf. Hague's John Wycliffe, 50.
- (2) De Eucharistia, Cap. II, 52
- (3) Sermones, II, 454; III, 279
- (4) Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 1-2; five positions, 3-7 inclusive.

latest (1)), that Wyclif openly attacked the Church's position in regard to the Eucharist, and this both by lectures and writings in Oxford.

From all the available mass of material of Wyclif's writings on the Eucharist, it is extremely difficult to arrive at exact conclusions as to what the Reformer believed concerning this sacrament. This lack of clarity is due largely to the fact that his view of the sacrament never reached full maturity, changing year by year in minor points, and being still in the process of development when he died. Thus evident inconsistencies are abundant -- despite Milman's view of Wyclif's consistency(2)-the inevitable consequences of a maturing and growing doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The confusion existing in the Reformer's views, or succession of views, of the Eucharist is well expressed by Matthew, showing that from the Wyclif writings it is impossible to deduce a consistent system:

"The truth is that Wyclif would like to avoid saying how Christ's body is present. Christ's institution makes it clear that He is in the sacrament otherwise than by that universal immanence by which He is in all things. If his opponents would let him, he would be content to say that Christ was present sacramentally (as he does say sometimes). 'In signo' but not 'ut in signo' means that although His presence is figurative, it is not simply a figure, but has a special efficacy. What that is precisely he cannot tell, and loses himself in trying to express it. He is sure that the current explanations are carnal and wrong, but does not know how to replace them.... There is a very good summary of his view in Lechler (Germ. ed.) I, 626; but neither Lechler nor anyone else can get

(1) Workman prefers 1379 (II, 30, 408-9), while Matthew chooses 1380 (Eng. Hist. Review, April, 1890, 328-330). It seems to me that conclusive evidence is found in De. Pot. Pap., 105, a work of 1379, where the Church's view is openly refuted. The great "De Eucharistia" is probably late in 1379.

(2) "His (Wyclif's) view of the Eucharist is singularly consistent, as much as may be on so abstruse a subject." Milman, Latin Christianity, VI, 131.

a satisfactory and clear exposition, for the simple reason that Wyclif did not know what it was, though he thought he knew what it was not. ... He would have liked ... Queen Elizabeth's quatrain:

'Christ was the Word that spake it;
He took the bread and brake it;
And what that Word doth make it,
That I believe and take it'." (1)

The best authorities agree that Wyclif's system of thought concerning the Eucharist is not entirely clear (2); thus the above statement by Matthew seems to represent a fair summary of the Reformer's confused position. We shall take the suggestion of Matthew as a skeleton outline for our subsequent discussion of Wyclif's interpretation of the Eucharist -- namely, the negative approach, or Wyclif's opinion as to what the sacrament was not; then will follow the positive approach, or what the sacrament was (insofar as we can interpret his confused writings.).

A. WHAT THE EUCHARIST IS NOT.

Wyclif, having once rejected transubstantiation, continued in his writings and public discourses to argue against it with unabated activity and undiminished fervor. We need not be surprised to find that the bulk of his work on the Eucharist is written from the negative point of view, with the Reformer employing arguments to destroy transubstantiation rather than to prove his own view. Had an equal amount of time and space been given to the positive side, we might today better understand the position which Wyclif held. In his approach, however, he appears to have adopted the method of Duns Scotus, a destruc-

- (1) A letter of Matthew to M.H. Dziiewicki, quoted in *De Apostasia*, Introduction, xxxvi. As to the quatrain, Wyclif voices practically the same sentiment in the *Triologus*, 264; and *Sermones*, II, 459.
- (2) Workman, II, 35 f; Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wyclif*, 175; Lechler, 353; Hague, 164 f.

tive criticism which eventually left in tatters that which he sought to attack.(1) We have already hinted somewhat as to the types of arguments the Oxford don used against transubstantiation, and now more specifically we classify them as scriptural, historical, experiential, philosophical and consequential. It is in this order that we shall endeavor to discuss and interpret his violent attack on the Church's doctrine of the Eucharist.

1. SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS.

For this "Doctor Evangelicus" the fact that transubstantiation was contrary to Scripture made this type of argument the weightiest against this particular dogma of the Church and Wyclif employed it with telling effect. Nothing stronger could be said from his point of view than that it "negat fidem scripturae".(2) This modern heresy of the Church undoubtedly arose through a neglect and disbelief of the Gospel:

"Indubie declinatio a lege evangelica est in causa, quare isti pseudodiscipuli antichristi reddunt se plus ignaros quam sunt bestiae vel pagani." (3)

"Istam igitur reputo causam lapsus hominum in istam haeresim, quod discredunt evangelio, et leges papales ac dicta apocrypha plus acceptant."(4)

All theories of man concerning this sacrament are absolutely vain if they are not founded on Scripture, and the voice of those who express these unfounded theories is worth no more than the cry of grackle!(5) He emphasizes the need of paying close attention to the teachings of Scripture on the subject of the Eucharist:

- (1) Cf. Workman, I, 110-111.
- (2) E.g. Trialogus, IV, II, 249; many times passim.
- (3) Trialogus, IV, V, 262
- (4) Ibid., IV, VI, 262
- (5) De Blasphemia, 252; De Eucharistia, 46-47

"Oportet, cum ista materia sit positiva ad fidem scripturae attendere et ipsi plene credere, et sicut virtute verborum fidei scripturae conceditur, quod hoc sacramentum est corpus Christi, et non solum quod erit vel figurat sacramentaliter corpus Christi," etc. (1)

But more of this will be given in his positive view.

In the whole sweep of the Scriptures no conversion theory is expressed -- nothing is said about making the body of Christ, which is found in the modern Church doctrine:

"In all holy scripture from the begynnyng of Genesis to the ende of the Apocalips, there be no wordes wrytten of the makynge of Christes bodye," etc. (2)

Curiously enough in condemning the friars in a brief passage for their wandering from Scripture, he seems to take the position of a loyal son of the Church, complaining that his opponents accuse the Pope and the Court of Rome of heresy in this sacrament:

"So thei (friars) glosen the wordis of holi writt, even to the contrarie, & thei leven the wordis of holi writt, & chesen hem newe founden termes of hem-silf, & seien that thei ben soth, but the wordis of holi writt ben false & ful of eresie; and so thei seien priuyle that crist & hise apostlis & the oolde seintis & the court of rome weren opyn eretikes." (3)

For Wyclif there are only two attitudes to be taken toward the Scripture by the believer in transubstantiation: he must either warp the sense of the Scripture, or else actually refuse to believe in it.(4) But one has to be careful to derive the true meaning of Scripture, which is not always the apparent surface meaning. There are three methods of predication: formal,

(1) Trialogus, IV, IV, 255

(2) Wyckett- section 11 (Oxford ed.). Cf. Tracts and Treatises, 279; Lechler, 345 n.; Workman, II, 39n. wonders about the Wyclif authorship, but on very weak support --even relegating it to a footnote!

(3) De Sacramentis Altaris - Matt. Eng. "orks, 358

(4) Trialogus, IV, III, 251

essential, and figurative (1); and he gives special attention to the third, the figurative. When Scripture says that John is Elias (Matt. 11)(2), or Christ is a rock (II Cor. 10) or seven ears of corn and seven fat kine are the seven years of plenty (Gen. 41), or Christ's words "I am the vine"(Jno. 15) -- these are not to be interpreted literally, but figuratively (3) -- even so must the sacramental bread be interpreted as the figurative body of the Lord.(4)

"Where in was Christ a very vyne, or where in was the breade Christes bodye, in fyguratiue speche, whych is hyd to the understanding of synners. Then yf Christe became not a materiall, either an earthly vyne, neither material vyne became the bodye of Christe. So neither the breade materiall breade was not chaunged from his substance to the fleshe and bloode of Christe." (5)

By this same figurative interpretation our Lord's expression "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Lk. 22), must mean that the sacrament of bread is an efficient memorial; and so Paul figuratively speaks of "the cup" (I Cor. 11) and Mark speaks figuratively of "the blood" (Mk. 14) (6). In a long discussion on figurative speech in the Bible Wyclif says:

"Also holy scripture hath many figuratif spechis ... that autouris of hooly scripture usiden moo figuris, that is, mo fyguratif spechis, than gramariens moun gesse, that reden not the figuris in holy scripture. It is to be war in the bi-gynnyng, that we take not to the lettre a figuratif speche, for thanne, as Paul seith, the lettre sleeth," etc. (7)

- (1) Trialogus, IV, VII, 266; Sermones I, 399
- (2) Trialogus IV, IV, 256; and more fully in IX, 274-5; Sermones I, 400; De Apostasia, 115.
- (3) Trialogus, IV, VII, 266-267
- (4) Ibid., IV, VII, 267-271; Sermones I, 92
- (5) Wyckett, Section XVI, (Oxford ed.), in Tracts and Treatises, 283.
- (6) Trialogus, IV, VII, 267-268
- (7) Forshall & Madden, Vol. I, Prologue, 43-44
Cf. also De Eucharistia, 35 f.

Wyclif is certain that aside from any figurative interpretations, the plain grammar of the Scriptures -- that which any schoolmaster teaches -- is against the doctrine of transubstantiation; and it confounds the wisdom of heretics, for the Scriptures say that the apostles knew the Lord in the breaking of bread:

"Et sic antichristus in ista haeresi destruit grammaticam, logicam, et scientiam naturalem; sed quod magis dolendum est, tollit sensum evangelii." (1)

Paul's words in I Cor. 10, "the bread which we break", is a further proof against transubstantiation, for the sacrament is truly bread, and so remains. A chosen vessel like Paul would not apply erroneous terms; had it not been bread, then Paul would have known, and would have spoken of it in terms of its own nature. With keen insight Wyclif shows that either the sense of Scripture must be ruthlessly cast aside -- also the reason of men -- or bread must be admitted to remain in the sacrament after consecration. Even mice and other beasts are aware that it is bread! (2)

Something of a curious interpretation is seen in connection with the words from the Lord's Prayer, where Wyclif agrees with Augustine that the petition "Give us this day our daily bread" may mean, among other things, the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist! (3) And the Reformer adduces this as proof that no conversion takes place -- that the sacrament is bread (4) -- a curious application of the allegorical exegesis of the age whereby a reasonable conclusion is reached by means of fantastic interpretation.

(1) Trialogus, IV, V, 261

(2) Ibid., IV, IV, 257; De Apost., 58; De Euch., 11

(3) Trialogus, IV, IV, 257

(4) Ibid., IV, IV, 257

But perhaps the most complete and convincing of all his scriptural arguments against transubstantiation is that which he gives in connection with the words "Hoc est meum corpus", etc.(1) His scholastically extended exegesis insists that "hoc" in this case must refer to bread, as opposed to the "heretical" interpretation of it as referring to Christ's body.(2) On the basis of Matt.26, Mark 14, and I Cor.11 Wyclif is fully convinced that Christ gave no false representation, for bread is explicitly mentioned in these passages, and the Master would not delude the Church by mentioning bread if He truly meant His body.(3) Since the apostles took cognizance of the object in Christ's hands, it had to be bread. The words do in no way suggest or mean that the bread will become His body, as bronze becomes a statue, or night becomes day; nor do these words refer simply to empty accidents.(4) And likewise the cup, by metonymy, means the wine in the cup -- certainly not the metal chalice -- and this wine remains wine just as much as the bread remains bread. How much at a loss are these "heretics"(5) to express themselves as to what they really mean by their doctrines and terms -- and how greatly they err when they say that the genus of the accidents might be meaner than horses' bread. (panis equinus).(6) They are as dumb as magpies! (7)

We need not here go into all the minor scriptural

- (1) Trialogus, IV, III, 250-255
- (2) Ibid., IV, III, 251
- (3) Ibid., IV, III, 252
- (4) Ibid., IV, III, 253
- (5) He calls those who believe in transubstantiation "dolosi haeretici"- crafty and deceitful because they fear the Scriptures. Trialogus IV, II, 249
- (6) De Apostasia, 95, 81; Trialogus IV, III, 254; and IV, VII, 269
- (7) Trialogus, IV, III, 254; De Apostasia, 82

arguments employed by the Reformer to support his attack against transubstantiation. Those we have cited should be adequate to prove that Wyclif is persistent in maintaining that the scholastic doctrine of conversion in general, and of transubstantiation in particular, is contrary to God's Word. On the theory that all truth is contained in Scripture (1), he condemns the Church's view of the Eucharist, for it not only is not found in God's Word, and is thus outside the pale of truth, but is contrary to it, and must therefore be rejected.

2. HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS.

This Oxford Reformer appears to rely strongly on the voice of history, which for him probably ranked next in importance to the voice of scriptural revelation in his search for truth. These two voices when considered together, Wyclif says, result in a combined testimony which labels the modern doctors of the Church as heretics, and consequently their doctrines must be rejected:

"Similiter cum juxta sanctos, quicumque imposuerit fidei scripturae aliquem sensum extraneum, quem Spiritus Sanctus non flagitat, sit ut sic haereticus, et iste sensus nec ex fide scripturae nec ex revelatione vel ratione ostendi poterit, sed quoscunque sanctos usque ad solutione Sathanæ omnino latuit, et plures sancti ut Augustinus et vivax ratio omnimode contradicunt, patet, quod ista sententia sit simpliciter dimittenda, specialiter cum sit falsa." (2)

He firmly held that transubstantiation was not a doctrine of the primitive Church; and those who require a belief in this modern doctrine simply make Christ and His apostles heretics.(3)

(1) Trialogus, III, XXXI, 240; and IV, XXXVII, 379; De Apostasia, 110, where he goes no farther than the Bible.

(2) Trialogus, IV, III, 254

(3) De Apostasia, 245; De Eucharistia, 47, 52; Confessio in Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 131

The Reformer's utter abhorrence of this newly-found eucharistic conception is seen in his words:

"Inter omnes haereses quae unquam in ecclesia pullularunt, nunquam considero aliquam plus callide per hypocritas introductam et multiplicius populum defraudantem, nam spoliatur populum, facit ipsum committere idolatriam, negat fidem scripturae, et per consequens ex infidelitate multipliciter ad iracundiam provocat veritatem."(1)

Plain spoken words are these! And he is equally certain that the modern Church has brought in a modern invention, and by so doing it asserts that which the ancient Church denied:

".... novella ecclesia ponit transubstanciacionem, et antiqua ecclesia eque vel magis autentica ipsam negat." (2)

Wyclif's divisions of eucharistic history are interesting, since he finds three distinct periods: (a) the period of the first one thousand years of Christendom; (b) the period from Berengar to Innocent III; and (c) the period of the modern doctors, roughly including two hundred years.(3) In the first period Satan was bound (4), and the Church held the true position:

"....quod ipsa hostia est substantia panis in natura, sed sacramentaliter corpus Christi, ut dicunt sancti; et ista fides manet semper apud catholicos."(5)

In support of this early position of the Church he calls in as evidence the testimony of many saints and patristic authorities. These he finds abundant, since he maintains that the court of Rome once held the true view before Satan was loosed, and at that time the scriptural, historical view was upheld by all

(1) Trialogus, IV, II, 248-249

(2) De Eucharistia, 3; similarly in 47-48, 52

(3) De Apostasia, 130, 148, 174, 178; De Eucharistia, 287

(4) De Apostasia, 76-78

(5) De Apostasia, 130

the holy doctors of the Church.(1) Augustine (2), Jerome (3), Ambrose (4), Hilary (5), Cyprian (6), etc.--- each of whom Wyclif claims is worth as much as a thousand of the present doctors as far as testimony is concerned!(7)-- are all made to support the early Church's view as set over against transubstantiation.

The second period, which Wyclif calls that of Berengar and Witmund (of Aversa)(8), is a time of multiple interpretations as to the quiddity of the host. It is the time of continual eucharistic warfare, for Satan is now loosed, and men are led astray from the truth of Scripture to mistake the sign for the thing signified. What was once counted as heresy has become the accepted doctrine of the Church, voiced by the Lateran Council in the dogma of Innocent III, and thus permitting sects of questionable orthodoxy to prevail over the pious uses ("pious usus") of Catholic antiquity.(9) Wyclif's position is largely in agreement with that of Augustine and Berengar (10), although the Oxford Reformer quotes Witmund, Berengar's adversary, to show that he is orthodox by agreeing with the doctor of Aversa.(11)

- (1) Trialogus, IV, II, 249
- (2) Augustine is quoted often in passim - e.g. De Euch., 17,33,136; De Apost., 50-51,251; Trialogus 253-4,257,260,267,272.
- (3) De Eucharistia, 27; De Apostasia, 50
- (4) De Euch.33,140; De Apost.53-4,75,108,126,160. It is a little surprising to find him referring to Ambrose, who was not in agreement with Augustine!
- (5) De Eucharistia, 33
- (6) De Apostasia, 126-7
- (7) De Apostasia, 50
- (8) De Apostasia, 130
- (9) De Apost., 108-9; cf. Workman, II, 35, and note.
- (10) De Apost., 68,190; De Euch., 108,117
- (11) De Apostasia, 126-127

The third period is that of the modern doctors, who for some two hundred years had held the so-called orthodox doctrine (1) -- and Wyclif mentions many of them, showing that he was abreast of the history of his age. It appears to have been a common method of the Schoolmen to arrange a genealogy of testimonies (2), stretching back through the centuries, in support of their particular views. This method Wyclif also chose (3), finding his position in agreement not only with that of many of the Fathers, but also with that of many of the more modern doctors of the Church. He includes in particular such outstanding divines as Richard Fitzralph, William of Ockham, Thomas Doking, Fishacre of Devonshire, Henry of Ghent -- and strangely enough Thomas Aquinas, whose opinions he believes to have been glossed by the friars to suit their own ends!(4) However, the arguments, pro and con, of this modern period carry very little weight with Wyclif, for he prefers the support of the early Church, and especially and preeminently the testimony of Christ and the Apostles. The doctors of the period when Satan was bound are of much greater value and authority than those of the period following the loosing of Satan. The Reformer ridicules the idea of a mere hundred years or so of modern teaching compared to the age of a thousand years of orthodoxy before the birth of a new, inconsistent, unscriptural theory of transubstantiation (5), which theory to him was but a modern invention of the devil to bring difficulties upon the

(1) De Eucharistia, 286-7; De Apostasia, 130, 148, 178

(2) De Apostasia, 193 f.

(3) De Apostasia, 227 f.

(4) A statement probably rashly made, for the extent of the Reformer's argument vs. Aquinas would indicate that Wyclif took seriously Aquinas' position -- and that he meant what he said!

(5) De Apostasia, 174, 178

Church.(1) But God does not allow the truth of the Eucharist to be destroyed, for the orthodox doctrine of the Supper is upheld by loyal laymen, and in the Greek Church, and elsewhere.(2)

3. EXPERIENTIAL ARGUMENTS.

Since Wyclif was an ardent realist, it is only natural to see him employing argument from human experience, appealing to the concurrent testimony of the physical senses, supported by reason, to prove that transubstantiation is a false doctrine in the Church. He claims that of all the senses touch and taste are the least likely to err in the judgments they give. But the doctrine of transubstantiation runs counter to these reliable senses, for the elements of the altar after consecration still feel and taste like bread and wine -- look like bread and wine -- in fact, continue to be bread and wine.(3) This either is true, or else God seeks purposely to deceive and delude men, which He does not do.(4) Bread differs in its degrees of brittleness, hardness, softness, toughness, etc., and these accidents do not exist per se; they vary in the sacrament of the altar, which is definite proof that there is a subject to these accidents. The same is true with wine, for its taste, sweetness, sourness and the like vary; there must be quality as well as quantity -- a position which strongly favors Scotus' view of the sacrament, and at the same time takes a definite slap at Aquinas' theory of quantity!(5)

Sight proves that the consecrated and unconsecrated hosts appear the same, for if mingled together they cannot be

- (1) De Eucharistia, 47-8; De Apostasia, 176
- (2) Trialogus, IV, V, 261
- (3) Trialogus IV, V, 259; S. E. W., III, 405
- (4) De Apostasia, 85
- (5) Trialogus, IV, V, 259

distinguished.(1) Man's reasonable judgment and even the judgment of mice and other creatures are to the effect that the bread is bread; and this is to assert that the brute creatures by their faculties are able to discern what the faithful cannot.(2) Lechler (3) seeks to make light of this type of argument, seeing in it more humor than anything else -- but such a conclusion is quite inconsistent with Wyclif's usual seriousness and almost complete lack of humor, and certainly most incompatible with the frank realism of the Reformer. It may be an argumentum ad absurdum, but it is given in all seriousness because of the sacredness of the subject with which he is dealing. It is quite safe to conclude that the usually serious mind would not stoop to the facetious so often.

Wyclif seeks to answer all those who claim to have had any miraculous experiences in connection with this sacrament. Those alleging to have had a vision of the corporal body of Christ should say specifically whether Christ was sitting or standing, as Stephen was able to state in his vision at the time of his martyrdom;(4) and mention should be made as to His color, quantity, figure, etc., and whether the body varies in different hosts. He goes on to prove that God would be too changeable if judged by the doctrine of transubstantiation, for the senses would show Him to be different in each case. He carries this argument to its inevitable conclusion that God would then possess certain repulsive characteristics, against

- (1) Trialogus, IV, V, 260; De Eucharistia 20-21
- (2) Trialogus, IV, V, 257, 260-261; De Apostasia 58, 121; De Eucharistia 11, 78, 124, 132, 195, 201.
- (3) Lechler, John Wycliffe, etc., 346
- (4) De Eucharistia, 21; *ibid.*, 185 he says that the whiteness of the sacrament "more than any other color excites vision"-- e.g. in Wales and Ireland.

which our physical senses rebel:

"Nichil enim paganius quam quod putrefacta hostia olet Deus, acefacto sacramento calicis acesceret Deus, et sic Deus noster in ecclesiis ruralibus fetet et acet, sed in civitatibus est sapidius atque recens ... Quid enim horribilius quam quod sacerdos post celebrationem portat corporaliter Deum in extremitatibus digitorum et quidquid tetigeret cum illis digitis facit corpus dominicum illud tangere?"(1)

As a student of science Wyclif is sceptical of any view which tends to throw doubt on the testimony of the physical senses, and thus discredit all experiential, scientific knowledge. If the accidents realistically appear to be bread, then his conclusion can only be that it is real bread in substance and essence as well as in appearance; and so with the wine.

4. PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS.

We must remember that Wyclif was first a philosopher and then a theologian -- and that his revolt against transubstantiation was at the beginning purely a matter of the schools, and one which grew out of his consistent realism.(2) Characteristically, as a Schoolman, he reasoned from great universals, adopting great principles of reality and fitting these principles to particular things. Yet in the theological field many Schoolmen -- Aquinas especially -- made their philosophy fit the practices and doctrines already in existence in the Church, and support them, unfounded though they may have been. This Wyclif could not do; he was too honest a philosopher. It appears that at one time Wyclif had no great difficulty accepting the nominalistic interpretation of the Eucharist (as we have already indicated), which included annihilation of the substance in the

(1) De Eucharistia, Cap. I, 22-23

(2) Cf, Workman, II, 33

elements.(1) But he soon found that such a view clashed with a thorough-going realism, for to be a strict realist he had to maintain that the annihilation of substance was impossible -- that even God could not annihilate that which He had created; as Being He could not destroy being, for to do so would be to destroy Himself.(2) The Reformer, having reached this conclusion, could then no longer accept into his system of philosophical thought the Scotist interpretation of annihilation of the substance in the sacramental elements, with accidents remaining (emphasized by Ockham), and neither could he accept the Thomistic quantitative doctrine of the elements with its hair-splitting distinctions between "subsistence" and "substance"(3), -- a most subtle doctrine which is extremely difficult to grasp, even for the best intellects then and now. The varying shades of nominalistic, semi-realistic, and realistic interpretations of the sacrament, with their consequent annihilations, cessations, identifications, impanations (invinations), and recreations did not satisfy the alert mind of this Oxford scholar. He could not bear to think of annihilation, for his whole philosophical system was based upon that which was real, and which existed. Principal Workman has well expressed the Reformer's problem, when he says:

- (1) De Ente, 134; Opus Minor, 307; Cf. Workman, I, 139 f.
- (2) De Eucharistia, Cap. III, 53-54, 129; De Ente, 289-290-- yet one statement seems to qualify this when in De Ente, 314, he agrees with Fitzralph, "quod (Deus) potest adnichilare, si voluerit."
- (3) Summa III, Q. 73-77, esp. 77 on "How the Accidents Remain", Eng. trans.(Vol.lx-lxxxiii), pp. 305-327; also cf. Workman II, 31

"To Wyclif the realist these (views) seemed phantoms and unrealities; annihilation in any form is unthinkable, for nothing is thinkable or possible except that which is." (1)

It appears that Wyclif wandered from one philosophical position to another, running the gamut from accepted orthodoxy to heresy -- at least a heresy in the eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities. At one time he stands with the Scotists, holding that the substance of the elements in the sacrament of the altar was annihilated, leaving only accidents remaining (2) -- yet how thoroughly he held this is a matter of question, for it may have been more sympathetic than real, since his early philosophical works condemn such a position. (3) Whatever his position he regrets in a frank confession that he held that accidents could exist without a subject:

"Confiteor tamen quod in heresi de accidente sine subiecto per tempus notabile sum seductus." (4)

"Quod accidens, ut est unum de quinque universalibus, est forma universalibus inexistens rei post et secundum completum esse individuum; et quamlibet talem potest deus (si sibi placuerit) extra substantiam in sua puritate et sua pura manencia conservare." (5)

Later on, in the confusion of his mind, he appears to abandon the annihilist theory to hold that the bread is no more, yet not annihilated (6), while the accidents remain without a subject -- which is practically the Thomistic position. How long he was in comparative agreement with Aquinas we do not know, but probably

- (1) Workman, II, 33; cf. Wyclif's De Logica, II, 86-89; and De Ente 290-293 -- in fact De Ente 288-315 is devoted to a full proof against annihilation.
- (2) De Ente, 314; Op. Minor 307; Misc. Phil. II, 78.
- (3) De Ente is before 1367 (cf. *ibid.* viii), and De Logica is probably before that -- maybe as early as 1361 (cf. *ibid.*, I, vi-viii).
- (4) Ad Argumenta Emuli Veritatis, in Opera Minora, 307.
- (5) Miscellanea Philosophica, II, 78
- (6) De Ente, 289; cf. also Workman, II, 33 and note.

not for long, for his realistic philosophical tenets would not permit him to tolerate the view of accidents without a subject. Thus his philosophical realism drove him not only from his friends, but from the Church's central doctrine of transubstantiation.(1)

By his dialectical testing of the orthodox position concerning the Eucharist, Wyclif came to deny the possibility of accidents existing without a subject. This was the worst heresy of the Church; even the idea gave him the utmost horror:

"Inter omnes haereses, quae unquam pullularent in ecclesia sancta Dei, non fuit nefandior, quam haeresis ponens accidens sine subjecto esse hoc venerabile sacramentum." (2)

"But tho moste heresye that God suffered cum to His Chirche, is to trowe that this sacrament is accydent withouten subgett." (3)

The importance of this philosophical approach in condemning the orthodox conception of the Eucharist is seen in that the last seven of Wyclif's twelve theses sent to Oxford in 1380 (1381?) (4) deal with the metaphysical abstractions involved in the Church's position of accidents without subject. He observed that the accidents -- whiteness, softness, roundness, hardness, toughness, sweetness, bitterness, etc. -- could not exist independently, and their very presence, which no one denied, must presuppose a substance in which they inhere, or to which they adhere. The whole idea of their existing alone is preposterous to him, and he resorts to analogy to prove that no actual annihilation, or cessation, or change of the original substance

- (1) Definite opposition is expressed against Thomas' quantitative theory in *De Apost.*, 125, 153, 168, 189.
- (2) *Triialogus*, IV, VI, 263
- (3) *Confessio* - in Winn's *Wyclif's Select English Writings*, 87; and *S. E. W.*, III, 502
- (4) Cf. F. Loofs, *Leitfaden der Dogmengeschichte*, 650-652 and note on date.

takes place, for a man when raised to the dignity of lordship or prelacy does not cease to be the same person. John, when called Elias by Christ, did not cease to be the same John (1); even the very curse of Christ did not annihilate the substance of the fig tree.(2) Wyclif cites St. Isidore's comparison of the change which takes place in the Eucharist to that of baptism -- but cleverly asks whether the neophyte turns to nothing at the time!(3) And if any cessation of substance is necessary, then the proponents of this theory must state exactly at what instant it takes place!(4)

Perhaps no single subject is referred to more often in Wyclif's writings than this "heresy" of the Church that an accident can exist without a subject (5) -- and characteristically his argument is mostly negative. He shows that Augustine said it was impossible (6); that Grosseteste said it was highly improbable (7); that it is just as reasonable to suppose that a subject can exist without its accidents.(8) It is a terrible thing to say that the bread becomes nothing (9), for according to the accident-theory it is neither bread nor Christ's body. How abject then the accidents must be, infinitely more imperfect and lacking in honor than a spider's web, or so much mud! (10) Wyclif rather ingeniously applies this argument to the

(1) Trialogus, IV, IV, 255-256

(2) Trialogus, IV, VI, 264

(3) De Apostasia, 169

(4) Trialogus, IV, III, 254

(5) References are almost too numerous to attempt to give, but some e.g. are De Eucharistia, 3, 5-7, 62-65, 69-72, 76-81, 132, 199, 210, 220, 221, etc. De Apostasia, 89-90, 109, 169, 178, 179. Trialogus, 248, 252, 254, 259, 261, 263. Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 129.

(6) Op. Min. 212; Fasc. Ziz. 131

(7) Trialogus IV, VI, 265

(8) De Eucharistia, 132

(9) Sermones I, 395

(10) De Blasphemia, 27; or "Horses' bread"-Fasc. Ziz., 106.

Lord's Prayer, saying that the accident-theory does grave injury to the petition "Give us this day our daily bread"-- for in the possible interpretation of the bread as meaning the bread of the holy Eucharist, the request would then be "Give us this day our accident without subject"-- which is obviously ludicrous and impertinent.(1) Such a tenet is an insane fiction, insulting to the Church and blasphemous in the sight of God.(2) In fact Christ's body and blood can be in any particle of true bread and wine much better than it can reside in a "most monstrous accident".(3)

Wyclif is as much opposed to any theory of cessation as he is to annihilation. In order for transubstantiation to take place there must be two separate movements; the cessation of the bread (or wine) and the beginning of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the remaining "quantity" or "aliquitas panis".(4) But cessation is as impossible to Wyclif as annihilation -- in fact the two are equivalent. He is certain that no destruction, or annihilation, or cessation of any kind takes place at the time the elements are consecrated.(5)

Likewise the Reformer is opposed to any theories of identification or impanation given in order to explain the real presence in the sacrament, for they are but heresies which lead to idolatry.(6) Identification, he says, is impossible, and he resorts to examples to prove it. It is impossible to make the person of Peter to be one with the person of Paul; or if 'A' be a linear foot, then by the reasoning of the identification theory

- (1) De Apostasia, 89-90
- (2) Confessio, in Fasc, Ziz., 129
- (3) Trialogus, IV, V, 260-261
- (4) De Eucharistia, 59-60
- (5) De Euch. 54-55, 219; De Apost. 170; Fasc. Ziz., 105
- (6) De Apostasia, 109

every quantitative part of that line is a foot in length -- a manifest contradiction!(1) Any difference whatsoever is repugnant to the idea of identification. Two objects cannot be identified, for the very fact that they are two, and therefore plural, makes them numerically distinct. One exception, however, he makes, and that is the two natures identified in the Person of Christ in the Incarnation. He says this identity is like looking into different mirrors to behold the same face.(2)

Likewise the Reformer cannot accept impanation. He is certain that it is impossible and heretical, and he warns all to beware of both identification and impanation in their views of the Eucharist.(3) Christ's body cannot possibly undergo all the transmutations which the bread undergoes -- e.g. made by the baker, eaten by a mouse, putrefy, turn to worms, be broken, etc. To believe that it can undergo all these possibilities is odious idolatry, for then every Church would have its own God.(4) Bread on the altar, broken in any number of parts, is not really but figuratively ("habitudinaliter") the body of the Lord; Christ's body does not descend from heaven to any Church where consecration of the elements takes place, but remains in the skies; its existence in the host is not dimensional, but spiritual, and therefore able to extend to every part of the world.(5) And since the presence is not dimensional, the body of Christ is not co-extensive with the body of the bread (6), for it is not present corporeally as in heaven, but spiritually. A great deal of

(1) Trialogus, IV, VIII, 269-270

(2) Ibid., IV, VIII, 271-272

(3) De Apostasia, 109; Trialogus, IV, VIII, 272

(4) Trialogus, IV, VIII, 271

(5) Ibid., IV, VIII, 272

(6) Ibid., IV, X, 278-279

adverbial quibbling is employed by Wyclif as to how the body of Christ is present in the sacrament, which will be dealt with in presenting the Reformer's positive view of the Eucharist.

Wyclif's position against the magical, "ex opere operato" view of the Eucharist causes him to brand the theory of multiplication of matter as absurd. He believes, with Augustine, in the possibility of supplying additional matter invisibly, as in the case of the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, or as in that of the woman being formed out of Adam's rib; but this extra matter is supplied, the original matter is not multiplied.(1) It was to him a horrible doctrine to say that the priest made Christ.

"And thou then that art an earthly man,
by what reason mayst thou saye that thou makest
thy maker." (2)

"Nichil enim horribilius quam quod quilibet sacerdos celebrans facit vel consecrat cotidie corpus Christi; nam Deus noster non est Deus recens nec corpus suum --- noviter faciendum." (3)

He devotes a whole chapter (4) to the discussion of multiplication of Christ's body, and, after employing many arguments, concludes that it cannot be done. It is simply a blasphemous claim of the Church, which is unfounded and unwarranted.(5)

As the Reformer was opposed to Thomas' "quantitative" theory (6) in connection with accidents without subject, so was he opposed to Thomas' view of concomitance. A definite slap at this is taken when he says:

- (1) De Apostasia, 112-114
- (2) Wycket (Oxford edition)(1828), VI
- (3) De Eucharistia, Cap. I, 15-16
- (4) De Apostasia, Cap. VIII, 92-102
- (5) De Apostasia, 95, 99
- (6) De Apostasia, Chap. 11 and 12

"Is the bodye of the lorde made at once or at twyse, is bothe the fleshe and the bloode in the hoost of the breade or elles is the fleshe made at one tyme, and the bloode made at other tyme, that is to saye the wyne in the chalyce? Yf thou wylt saye it is ful and hole the manhode of Christe in the hoost of breade, bothe fleshe & bloode skynne, heere, and bones, then makest thou to worshyppe a false god in the chalyce, whych is unconiured when ye worshyp the breade, and yf ye say the fleshe is in the breade, and the blood in the wyne, then thou muste graunte, yf thy craft be true, as it is not in dede, that the manhode of Christ is departed and that he is made two tymes."etc.(1)

The Church's view of concomitance had not yet led to the withdrawal of the cup from the laity, and consequently no mention is made of this in the Reformer's writings, although this denial of the cup to the laity was destined to play a large part in the ministry and writings of Wyclif's follower, John Huss, in Bohemia a few years following the Oxford professor's death.

5. CONSEQUENTIAL ARGUMENTS.

Wyclif further argues against transubstantiation because of the consequences to which it leads. The sincerity of this condemnation of the accepted doctrine goes deeper than a mere loyalty to realism, for he soon saw the abuses growing out of the Church's view, -- and in opposing it he states that his chief intention is to call the Church from idolatry.(2) In the adoration of the material elements, as though they were the body of Christ, he sees great harm, and claims that the Church has erred in this adoration for many years. It is clearly to him an idolatrous practice (3), and the mere belief in transubstantiation will eventually lead innocent people to commit idolatry.(4) He admits in one passage that he himself worships

(1) Wycket, (Oxford ed., op. cit.) XII

(2) Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 107

(3) De Blasphemia 20,31; De Apost. 129,245; De Eucharistia 14,48,53,62-63,110-111,142-143,315-318

(4) Wycket,XIII; Trial.249,269,271,276,280; De Apost.187-8.

the host conditionally, but true adoration is to be paid only to the body of the Lord which is in heaven (1); and therefore he has no patience with the friars who claim a veneration for, instead of adoration of, the host, when in reality they are idolatrous.(2) He abhorred the thought of the worship of that which was only an accident without a subject; for an accident is the meanest of things, yet priests make this their God.(3) Such practice was not found in the early Church:

"For where fynde ye that euer Christ
or any of his disciples or apostels taught any
man to worshipec it (i.e. the sacred host)." (4)

These "priests of Baal"(5) in consecrating accidents are perfectly aware that their claim of making Christ is but a pretense, however much they desire to believe that some portion of divinity is bestowed.(6)

The Reformer condemned transubstantiation as the "abomination of desolation"(7) which gave the priests undue power, at least in the eyes of the faithful. We have already seen that it led to a belief that man could make his Maker -- a thing which was dishonorable and blasphemous to God in that it discredited His purity and His power. This self-exaltation of the priests, because of a prevailing ecclesiasticism, was destined to be one of the important factors contributing to the Reformation, and especially so when the power the priests claimed was perverted for pecuniary purposes. Simony entered this holiest sacrament of the Church -- a consequence which Wyclif condemns

(1) Trialogus, IV, X, 231

(2) Ibid., IV, VII, 269. Full and open worship was not decreed until the Council of Trent.

(3) De Apostasia, 95

(4) Wycket (op.cit.), # 6

(5) De Blasphemia, 224, 225

(6) Trialogus, IV, IV, 258

(7) Ibid., IV, VII, 268

consistently in connection with any of the sacraments.(1) He shows that simony, blasphemy and apostasy are inseparable in connection with the heretical doctrine of the Church, especially among the mendicant friars.(2)

B. WHAT THE EUCHARIST IS.

As we turn from Wyclif's negative considerations to his positive conception of the Eucharist, we find at once that the Reformer never doubted the right of the Eucharist to be called a sacrament. He admits that it is a sacrament, not only of high rank, but the chief one of the Church, fully warranted in Scripture:

"...Eucharistia, quae est penultimum sacramentum, tum quia est magis venerabile inter cetera, tum secundo quia videtur habere fundationem maximam in scriptura," etc. (3)

So firmly convinced is he that he criticizes certain modern heretics, who deny the sacramental nature of the Eucharist in order to escape certain logical inconsistencies which follow from their errors.(4) The Reformer shows that it is called a sacrament by the prayers of the Church, by papal enactments, and by the learned ecclesiastical doctors.(5)

There can be no doubt that Wyclif clung to a view of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament, so that his conception of the Eucharist is more than just a purely symbolic view. He was positive that Christ was in the elements, but how he could not say with definiteness. However, his greatest emphasis is not upon Christ's presence, but upon the fact that

- (1) He condemns it in connection with the Eucharist in Trialogus, IV, V, 261; and VI, 264
- (2) De Apostasia, I; S. E. W., III, 226; 286 f.
- (3) Trialogus IV, II, 247; cf. ibid., IV, I, 245
- (4) Ibid., IV, II, 247
- (5) Ibid., IV, II, 248

after the consecration of the elements true bread and true wine remain. He sought primarily to establish this truth, and thus upset transubstantiation; and secondarily to establish the presence of Christ, a thing which in general was not difficult, for the Church accepted the real presence of the Savior in the sacrament.

He seeks to prove that the natural bread remains (also the wine) by much the same method as that employed in disproving transubstantiation -- namely, by using scriptural, historical, philosophical and analogical arguments. Christ's words of institution at the Supper, with Paul's words agreeing therewith, are sufficient to make Wyclif believe that the elements are and continue to be real bread and real wine, each being sacramentally the body of Christ.(1)

"And right as tho persoun of Crist is verrey God and mon -- verrey godhed and verrey monhed -- right so holy Kirke, mony hundred winters, haves trowed tho same sacrament is verrey Gods body and verrey bred." etc. (2)

He believed that the Eucharist is the body of Christ in the form of bread:(3)

"the sacrid oost whijt & round that men seen in the preestis hondes is veri goddis bodi in forme of breed."(4)

He held that it is bread substantially after it has begun to be sacramentally the body of Christ (5); that no conversion of substance takes place, the sacramental species remaining bread and wine. It must be admitted that Wyclif at times uses words, such

- (1) Confessio- Fasc.Ziz. 126; Trialogus IV, IV, 255-8
- (2) (Concerning the Eucharist), S. E. W., III, 502
- (3) Trialogus IV, II, 249; cf. also De Apostasia, 233; S. E. W., III, 502
- (4) De Sacramento Altaris, Matt. Eng. Works, 357
- (5) Trialogus, IV, IV, 256

as "convertitur", "convertuntur", "transsubstanciatur", etc., showing that he believed in some sort of change, but not in anything which involved destruction.(1) The change takes place, but the substance remains.

"Conversio, enim, vel transsubstantiatio, non dicit destructionem essencie, sed eius remanenciam." (2)

At times he appears on the surface to have lapsed into a conversion theory, when he says that the bread is veritably the body of Christ (3), but one must not be too hasty to judge, for no doubt remains as to his true position when one reads his words:

"Et non dubium etiam laico idiotae, quin sequitur, 'iste panis est corpus Christi, ergo iste panis est et per consequens manet panis, et sic simul est panis et corpus Christi'."(4)

He calls to witness in support of his position not only the testimony of Jesus and the Scriptures, but also that of the saints and learned doctors of the Church, six of whom are named specifically in his "Confessio" -- Ignatius, Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Pope Nicholas II -- and lastly, the general use of the Church in the Canon of the Mass.(5) One of Wyclif's opponents, in turn, attempted a list of authorities against him, giving the testimony of a noble array of distinguished men, numbering twenty-three in all, who did not hold the opinions of the Oxford don; but the Reformer observed that Christ had been left out! His position was orthodox, he maintained, for it was

- (1) De Apostasia, 68, 170; De Eucharistia, 219, etc.
- (2) De Apostasia, 170
- (3) Trialogus, IV, IV, 255
- (4) Ibid., IV, IV, 255
- (5) Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 126-218

in accord with Scripture, the early Church, and had ecclesiastical sanction, for it was voiced "in the blessed decretal of Nicholas II, Ego Berengarius",(1) and many prominent English divines agreed with his position such as Thomas Dooking, William of Ockham (!), Fishacre of Devonshire, "Henry of Gawnt" (who is really Henry Goethals of Ghent), and Fitzralph.(2)

It is most difficult to determine what position in regard to the Eucharist Berengar of Tours really took, but we have already seen something of his stand against the crude, materialistic conception of the mass, as is seen in the theory of physical manducation. At times Wyclif seems to take his stand with Berengar (3); in other places he seems to oppose Berengar.(4) In the opinion of Dziewicki, Wyclif and Berengar held substantially the same views on the Eucharist, but put their explanations of it in entirely different terminology.(5) Berengar, being a nominalist, naturally expressed himself in different terms from those of the realist, Wyclif. Wyclif held a real presence of Christ in the sacrament, while Berengar, to be consistent with his nominalism, said that the presence was nominally Christ.

In asserting a real presence of Christ, and at the same time maintaining that the consecrated elements in the Eucharist remained bread and wine, Wyclif finally adopted a position which in the end amounted to consubstantiation -- "practically identical with that taken at a later date by Luther".(6)

- (1) De Apostasia, 68, 109, 193; De Eucharistia, 117
- (2) De Apostasia, 75; De Eucharistia, 292
- (3) De Apostasia, 68; De Eucharistia, 2, 34-35
- (4) De Apostasia, 79, 126-127
- (5) De Apostasia, Introduction, xxxv-xxxvi
- (6) Workman, II, 37. However, Prof. Dyson Hague does not agree -- cf. Hague, 165

Of many things the Reformer was uncertain, but he was certain that "Christ lies hidden insensibly in the elements"(1), that the elements are not changed as to substance, that as Christ is of a dual nature, human and divine, so there is a dual nature in the substance of the Eucharist, both body and bread.(2)

"Et primo quod hoc sacramentum sit corpus Christi in forma panis." (3)

"I bileve, as Crist and his apostels have taught us, that tho sacrament of tho auter, whyte and rounde, and like to other bred, or oost sacred, is verrey Gods body in fourme of bred; and thof hit be broken in thre partyes, as tho Kirke uses, or elles in a thousande, evere ilk one of these parties is tho same Gods body." (4)

The true doctrine of the Church is decided "more completely, more authoritatively, and more moderately in the gospel of Christ than in the court of Rome" (5), and is:

"Hoc sacramentum ex fide evangelii est naturaliter verus panis, et sacramentaliter ac veraciter corpus Christi." (6)

To show that he believed in both the body and the bread as being present in the sacrament of the altar, he mentions both in his English confession, a part of which has already been given:

"Ow! how gret diversyte is bytwene us that trowen that this sacrament is verrey bred in his kynde, and bytwene heretikes that tellen that hit is an accydent withouten sugett!... And how gret diversite is bitwene us that trowen that this sacrament in his kynde is verrey bred, and sacramentaly God body, and bytwene heretikes that trowen and tellen that this sacrament may on no wyse be Gods body!" (7)

- (1) De Eucharistia, 29
- (2) De Apostasia, 106, 213; Sermones, IV, 14, 16
- (3) Trialogus, IV, II, 249
- (4) (Concerning the Eucharist), S. E. W., III, 502
- (5) Trialogus, IV, II, 249; also IV, II, 247
- (6) Ibid., IV, VI, 263
- (7) (Concerning the Eucharist), S. E. W., III, 502-503

He was not content with a purely Zwinglian view, making the elements mere symbols, or signs of a thing signified, although it is admitted that this appears now and again in portions of his writings.(1) This tendency will doubtless account for the fact that his Lollard followers became more Zwinglian than Lutheran in their eucharistic views.(2) But for Wyclif there could be but one true interpretation -- although we wish he had been clearer in his writings concerning it -- and that interpretation is expressed in one grand conclusion:

"Et patet conclusionis praedictae,
quod hoc sacramentum venerabile est in natura
sua verus panis, et sacramentaliter corpus
Christi." (3)

Wyclif truly finds himself at a loss for words when it comes to saying how the presence of Christ is in the sacrament of the Eucharist. As a result of his somewhat confused mind in this matter we have many passages of scholastic distinction between "in signo" and "ut in signo", passages of adverbial warfare, and passages of analogy heaped upon analogy. He is certain that Christ is in the sacrament otherwise than as in a figure -- or as he puts it, "in signo", not "ut in signo".(4) Matthew's words, already quoted in this chapter, here have a direct bearing which should permit repetition:

"If his opponents would let him, he would be content to say that Christ was present sacramentally, as he does say sometimes. In signo (but not ut in signo), in his writings, means that though His presence is figurative, it is not simply a figure, but has a special efficacy and reality of its own. What that is precisely

- (1) Especially in his Wycket, where he says, "a sacrament is no more to say but a sign or mind of a thing passed or a thing to come." (sec.15) De Blas.251
- (2) Cf. Workman, II, 38-39 and note
- (3) Trialogus, IV, IV, 258
- (4) De Apostasia, 223

he cannot tell and loses himself in trying to express it." (1)

The fact that Wyclif makes a very careful distinction in these Latin expressions is proof positive that there was a careful distinction in his mind between the merely figurative (Zwinglian) view and the consubstantiation (Lutheran) view; he favored the latter.

Wyclif's positive arguments as to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist involved him in many hair-splitting distinctions, and numerous adverbs are employed to show how Christ is present at every point of the host. His true humanity is present "not only virtually, but sacramentally" (2); but it is a fictitious belief of the Church that holds that He is present "corporeally and carnally".(3) Wyclif believes with Augustine that the body and the blood are present "vere, sed figurative".(4) In one sense he admits a corporal presence since the body is there, yet he carefully adds a qualifying phrase:

"Unde dicitur presencia corporalis, quia est presencia corporis, non quia illud corpus est ibi corporaliter, sed spiritualiter." (5)

In his "Confessio" Wyclif indicates that there is a three-fold presence in the consecrated elements, virtual, spiritual, and sacramental.(6) Christ's body is present "spiritualiter et non dimensionaliter ibi". It has dimensions in heaven, where it is present "substantialiter", but not on the altar; its greatness

- (1) De Apostasia, Introduction, xxxvi.
- (2) De Apostasia, 103
- (3) De Blasphemia, 251
- (4) Ibid., 251
- (5) Ibid., 253
- (6) Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 115-116

is a greatness of virtue.(1) In another place he says it is present in power and symbolically -- not as in heaven.(2) The Savior's body lies in the host as in the tomb, but only sacramentally (3); it can never be present essentially, substantially, corporeally, identically, extensionally, or dimensionally. (4) He realizes the dangers of equivocal terminology, and especially so when it is employed with an intent to deceive; therefore, that he might not be misunderstood, he heaps adverb upon adverb to make his position clear -- which often results in darkening counsel with words! With dogged determination he insists that the bread is the body of Christ truly and really, but also figuratively and sacramentally (5); Jerome says that it is sacramentally the body of the Savior, and men should be content to abide by the opinion of this learned and accurate scholar.(6) If the body of Christ is present dimensionally, as some claim, then they are obliged to tell whether it is sitting or standing, its color and characteristics, etc.(7)

By resorting to many analogies -- some of which are very ingenious -- Wyclif endeavors to explain how Christ is really present in the consecrated elements. Here his scientific knowledge was utilized, for he said that believers may receive Christ in the host as the sun's fire is received through a sphere of crystal (8); as fire is present in charcoal, so is Christ present in the host, and the bread should be forgotten,

- (1) De Apostasia, 253; cf. ibid., 110; Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 117; De Eucharistia, 301-302
- (2) De Eucharistia, 303
- (3) Sermones, I, Sermo XXIV, 164
- (4) De Apostasia, 213
- (5) Sermones, II, Sermo LXI, 453
- (6) Trialogus, IV, III, 254
- (7) De Eucharistia, 21, 301; De Blasphemia, 28
- (8) De Eucharistia, 12

though still present, just as we forget that charcoal is present in the fire (1); in a letter the paper and ink do not detract from the message, and neither should the presence of material bread detract from the spiritual message of the sacrament.(2) Christ is present in every morsel of the consecrated host, as the soul is present throughout the body (3); yet He may not be devoured by a beast; a lion eating the consecrated bread does not eat the body of the Savior (4); animals may eat carnally the host, but they cannot partake spiritually of the sacrament -- which shows how far apart the Reformer really conceived the corporal and spiritual reception of the sacrament. The Body is present in the host as a face is present in a mirror; the mirror may be broken but the face is not; so may the host be broken, but Christ's body is not.(5) Again, the Body is present in the host,

"... as a man may light many candles
at one candle, and the light of that one candle
never the more nor never the less," (6)

although he took precaution to say that this was not a multiplication of gods, as the Church's position logically sets forth. The presence is more than figurative, for he sweeps away the objection that the crucifix in Church is a better sign of Christ than the bread, and therefore may be the body (the sign becoming the thing signified), by saying that Christ is in the sacrament otherwise than as in a figure-- "in signo" and not "ut in signo". (7)

- (1) De Apostasia, 243
- (2) De Eucharistia, 144
- (3) Ibid., 11-12
- (4) Ibid., 11, 19
- (5) Sermones, II, 458; IV, 351-2; Wycket, section 14
- (6) Wycket, section 14
- (7) De Apostasia, 223

Analogies are used also to prove that there is no cessation of substance in the elements when consecrated. It is as though a sinner is changed to a saint, but still remains a man; it is as when a man is made a prelate, that he does not cease to be a man (1); or when ice freezes it does not cease to be water. When a pope becomes a pope his humanity does not cease; and when the bread and wine become consecrated species, they do not change as to substance. It is bread substantially after it has begun to be sacramentally the body of Christ.(2)

Wyclif struggles to make his view plain -- he never quite succeeds -- by appealing to the hymn of Thomas Aquinas, which expresses the fact that Christ is present in the sacrament of the altar really and truly; though the Reformer interprets the hymn entirely in favor of his own view:

"Verbum caro, panem verum
Verbo carnem efficit,
Fitque sanguis Christi merum;
Et si sensus deficit," etc. (3)

In order to have an explanation for the dual nature of the sacrament, Wyclif is driven to recognize a miracle as taking place within the elements. By virtue of the sacramental words a supernatural change takes place, by means of which the bread and wine remain indeed what they are as to their substance, but from that moment they are in truth and reality Christ's body and blood.(4) This miracle rests upon the Divine ordinance, the words of institution being not those of a priest, but those of Christ:

"Teneamus igitur quod virtute verborum
Christi panis ille fit et est miraculose corpus
Christi ultra possibilitatem signi ad hoc humanitus
instituti." (5)

- (1) Trialogus, IV, IV, 255-256
- (2) Ibid., IV, IV, 256
- (3) De Apostasia, 47; De Eucharistia, 25
- (4) De Apostasia, 224
- (5) Ibid., 224

In the same passage he takes care to state that there is no hypostatical union of the body and the bread, as the two natures of Christ are united. It is not an identical unity, but approximates it. Any analogy, therefore, from the Incarnation is not entirely satisfactory to the Reformer, although he uses it sometimes himself, in spite of the fact that such analogy is infected with a tendency toward Docetism.(1) Christ's body remains in heaven, and believers in the sacrament may truly partake of it, but not as to substance. It is a spiritual and a sacramental partaking, which is not in accord with Luther's later view of the ubiquity of the Savior's body, and the corporeal receiving held by the Wittenberg monk. With Luther the presence of Christ in the sacrament is definitely corporeal, so that it can be masticated by the teeth. This is not in Wyclif's doctrine, though the presence is spiritual and real, and at times he indicates that the body of Christ is brought into every particle of the elements. Neither is Wyclif's view the purely symbolic Zwinglian view; nor is it the Calvinistic view of a true communion effected by the Holy Spirit. Of all the later Reformation views of the Eucharist, Wyclif's doctrine stands more closely akin to that of Luther's than to any of the others, since the Oxford don emphasized a position of consubstantiation, which, however, was less materialistic than the view put forward by the great German Reformer. We cannot agree with the conclusion of Dr. Joseph Corbett, whose estimate of Wyclif in this connection is as follows:

"His position is rather Calvinistic than Lutheran, though it cannot fairly be identified

(1) Cf. Lechler's discussion, 353

with the interpretation put upon the sacrament either by the German or the French reformers." (1)

With his emphasis upon the veritable, sacramental and spiritual presence of Christ in the consecrated species, Wyclif seems to stand between Zwingli and Luther.

We turn now to consider the Oxford Reformer's position as to communion corollaries, or minor features (at least to him) in connection with the Eucharist. He maintained that the elements might be consecrated by a layman, if necessary.(2) He cannot agree with the Church's position that fasting is necessary before communion, for it is disproved by the practice of the Savior.(3) The real need is a fast from sin. He believed that the time of communing must not be stipulated by the Church, for here individual liberty must be exercised -- e.g. Maundy Thursday is as good as Easter Sunday if one prefers it. Confession to a priest was customary in the medieval Church before coming to the Eucharist, but this Wyclif did not deem necessary, although he encouraged contrition of heart at this time. Priests seeking money from the confessional should be ignored, and after due contrition the faithful should partake of the consecrated elements.(4) The problem of taking communion "in both kinds" -- both the bread and the wine -- did not occur to Wyclif, it seems, as it did to his follower, Huss, who later, with Utraquists and

- (1) Joseph Corbett, "John Wyclif", in *The Reformers*, 36.
- (2) *Dialogus*, IV, X, 280; *De Eucharistia*, 4, 98-99.
Yet some uncertainty appears in *De Euch.*, 123
- (3) *De Apostasia*, 123; S. E. W. I, 360-1; *De Eucharistia*, 93, 145. Dyson Hague says that even the great protesting men of the Church of England "could hardly have more clearly set forth the case against fasting communion than John Wycliffe". Hague's "John Wycliffe", 167
- (4) *De Blasphemia*, 145

Calixtines, fought violently in order to receive both the cup and the wafer.

Masses for the dead were considered by Wyclif as useless -- at least he attaches little importance to them. What a man does in life is of far greater importance in attaining salvation than anything that can be done for him after he has gone.(1) With this position the Reformer could consistently do nothing but take a position against the sacrifice of the mass. He did not war against this doctrine of sacrifice in the Eucharist as did Luther in later years, for in the fourteenth century the doctrine, though present from antiquity (according to some), was not a prevailing one. Yet Wyclif is not entirely silent on it, though it was more his lot to attack the belief in a miraculous change in the nature and substance of the elements -- in the Wycket Wyclif denounces as monstrous the idea that the priest renews at each sacrament the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ at Calvary, though we must confess it is more by implication than by open expression. In one passage in a major Latin treatise, he gives an express recognition and approval of the idea of the mass sacrifice, yet the sacrifice meant is only the thank-offering of a grateful feast of commemoration, not the effectual oblation of a sacrifice of atonement. (2)

SUMMARY: We have seen in the foregoing pages that John Wyclif zealously attacked the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, claiming that it cast an unpardonable slur upon the truthfulness of Scripture and the history of the Church; that it involved the blasphemy of believing that a creature can

(1) Sermones, IV, 28-33

(2) De Euch., I, 16; cf. Pennington's "John Wiclif", 264

create its Creator; that it posited the utterly impossible absurdity of "accidents without subject", qualities without an underlying substance; that it imposed upon men the necessity of discrediting and contradicting the clearest evidences of the faculties of taste, touch, smell, etc.; and that it led men to idolatry and simony. The emblematic interpretation of the Eucharist did not satisfy him; the bread was with him something more than a mere figure of Christ's body, since that body is present, though spiritually and sacramentally -- not essentially, substantially, or corporeally. Upon consecration no conversion of the elements takes place; he could not accept any miraculous "ex opere operato" view of this, or any other, sacrament. In his sincere assault upon the dogma of transubstantiation he believed he had done much to emancipate the people from a pernicious superstition, and to wrest from the hands of a dominating clergy a weapon by the use of which they had too long enslaved and tyrannized over a credulous Church. The great writers of the Church of England who touch upon the life of the Reformer make the claim that Wyclif agreed almost in detail with the position of their Church concerning the Eucharist.(1)

In attempting a brief criticism of the Oxford Reformer's conception of this sacrament, we would indicate that the cardinal defect of his view is that it fails to emphasize the presence of the Spirit in the heart of the recipient, as was brought out later by the leaders of the Reformation. With all of his polemic against transubstantiation, and with all his

(1) E. g. Robert Vaughan, Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, and more recently Prof. Dyson Hague.

merits as a defender of the real, spiritual presence of Christ in the sacrament, he does not seem to realize, as the Reformed doctrine so clearly indicates, that this spiritual presence is the presence of Christ by the Holy Spirit, not in the elements but in the hearts of all believers who partake. This fault is due to his confusion of "the sacrament" with "the elements", and to the fact that he never understood that the sacrament is not a means of special grace, but only a special means of grace.

Here, in our opinion, is indeed the basal fault of the medieval and the early teachers in connection with the Eucharist: they have no clear doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit. Calvin is the first theologian who adequately apprehended the teaching of the New Testament in this connection.(1) To be sure, his own treatment of the Lord's Supper is unsatisfactory -- so much so that the Westminster Divines, and Presbyterians in general, are on this point not truly Calvinistic: they have eliminated his inconsistencies and confusions. But as against all writers on the Supper before him, Calvin has grasped the important point that there is no blessing to be had at the Lord's Table without faith and the presence of the sanctifying Spirit in the heart of the recipient. Now Wyclif, without this comprehensive insight into the work of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament, often speaks inconsistently of the elements and the sacrament. There cannot be a sacrament without the material elements, but neither can there be a sacrament -- in the sense of a salutary grace -- without the effectual working of the Spirit. Wyclif, indeed, seems to have had an inkling of this truth when

(1) Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Bk. III

he speaks of the spiritual and dynamic and "sacramental" presence of Christ; but there is no clear view of the spiritual presence as meaning the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the heart of the righteous recipient.

Even though our Reformer did not comprehend in all its fullness the Protestant position in regard to the Eucharist, we must in all fairness place him in line with other great Reformers who demanded a simpler and purer view of this sacrament, for, as one scholar has put it,

"Wyclif challenged the belief in a miraculous change in the nature of the elements; the Hussites attacked the denial of the cup to the laity; and Luther warred against the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass." (1)

And because of Wyclif's violent protest against the so-called orthodox view of the Roman Church of his day, we can but agree with one of the recent Anglican scholars who says of the Oxford professor and don:

"....we will agree that the man took, for one of his day, a very definite Evangelical and Protestant position." (2)

- (1) M. Creighton, "A History of the Papacy during the Period of the Reformation", I, 114
 (2) Dyson Hague, "John Wycliffe", 166

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE REFORMER'S LEGACY TO THE WORLD

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To many of our modern day the figure of John Wyclif may seem as one buried in a dim and misty past, yet to those of more discerning eyes he is a figure of outstanding importance and unquestioned influence. The true student of history sees in this fourteenth century reformer one who breaks the cerements of a dead medievalism to stand forth with a definite contribution to succeeding generations. There are those, however, who maintain that the influence of Wyclif perished almost with his ashes, and that he had no connection whatever with the later Reformation (1); but the majority of weighty testimony is to the effect that the doctrines and principles of this Oxford don continued to live, although obscured for a time, in the hearts and minds of his followers. His books were still read, his Bible continued in circulation, his teachings were not forgotten.(2) Perhaps Dr. Workman's concise statement concerning Wyclif's influence summarizes the findings of modern scholarship on this point:

"His movement, it is true, failed to accomplish his purpose; nevertheless it lingered right down to the Reformation itself. Moreover, Wyclif's influence outside England was even greater and more abiding than in his own country.... Wyclif lived again in Bohemia; Hus and Jerome of Prague continued the work which he had begun." (3)

The Reformer of Lutterworth was unquestionably a man before his day; his greatness was in many ways his failure, for his age could not attain the spiritual heights for which he strove. Yet that greatness was not for nought. The cry of reform

- (1) Cardinal F.A. Gasquet, "The Eve of the Reformation", 209-211; J. Gairdner, "Lollardy and the Reformation in England"
- (2) Capes, The English Church in the 14th and 15th Centuries, 178-196; Clark, History of English Non-Conformity, I, 76-8; Urquhart, in Cath. Encycl. XV, 723; Loserth, Wyclif and Hus; Lechler, John Wycliffe, I, 439-467; Pennington, IX, 280-304; others are Workman, Hague, Harnack, etc.
- (3) Workman, John Wyclif, I, 7-8

which he raised was never again hushed; the greatest intellect of that century had worthily conceived principles, which, when applied, were destined to tear away the medieval structure and lay foundations of greater freedom and enlightenment. Although he was not the first to conceive of these truths (therefore the name "Morning Star of the Reformation" is not strictly correct), he was the first to unite several great Protestant principles under one leader, and thus give to these truths the impetus which came from his mighty intellect and versatile personality.

Specifically, Wyclif's legacy to the world may be listed under five headings: (a) his emphasis upon the fact that the worship and sacraments of the Church are perverted and encumbered by the traditions and customs of men; (b) his emphasis upon a return to the Scriptures as the only source of authority in the Church; (c) his emphasis upon the Scriptures in the vernacular, resulting in the first English Bible, and a consequent legacy to the English language; (d) his emphasis upon national and individual liberty from the power of the man-made Roman hierarchy; and (e) his emphasis upon a better intellectual basis for our faith, with the thought that reason and revelation are not incompatible. Each one of these emphases is a definitely Protestant principle, and by his strong advocacy of them Wyclif exerted a powerful influence on the later reformers-- e.g. Hus, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Hooker, Ridley and others.

I. The first legacy of the Reformer to posterity, that of his emphasis upon the fact that the worship and sacraments of the Church had become perverted and corrupted by man-made encumbrances, has been treated fully in the foregoing pages, and a repetition here is needless. Let it suffice to say that Wyclif definitely felt that a change in the Church, both as to practice

and as to doctrine, was imperative. In this demand for some kind of reform within the Church Lechler sees the rector of Lutterworth as "the earliest personal embodiment of the evangelical reformer"(1), for he was one who devoted himself to the task of bringing about reform with the full power of a master mind, and with the full force of determination and joyful self-sacrifice of a loyal servant of Christ.

II. The second legacy which Wyclif left to the world is perhaps the one of supreme importance, for it is that by which he is best known -- namely, the emphasis upon a return to the Holy Scripture as the only source of authority in the Church. Here he is following the emphasis of Augustine, Bradwardine, and Grosseteste. The Reformer makes a constant appeal to the Word of God; the Bible alone is infallibly true, and the absolute and only standard for faith and practice.(2) It is infinitely superior to all human authority, traditions, doctrines or ecclesiastical ordinances.(3) In the Church only those doctrines of faith which are definitely founded upon Scripture are to be upheld(4)-a position which is almost identical with that of the "verbo solo" of the German Reformation. Capes has appropriately said of him:

"Wyclif's emphasis of the Bible as the absolute standard of appeal is seen by his constant references to the Scriptural text. In one volume of a single work some seven hundred quotations from it may be counted, and contemporaries recognized his reverence for it when they styled him the Doctor Evangelicus."(5)

It is a little surprising to learn that Wyclif counted only twenty-two books of the Old Testament and twenty-four in the New

(1) Lechler, John Wycliffe, etc., 437

(2) De Blasphemia, 44

(3) De Ver. Sac. Script., I, 394, 405; Dialogus, 26, 77; De Apostasia, 110; Trialogus, III, XXXI, 240; S.E.W., I, 225

(4) De Ver. Sac. Script., I, 382

(5) Capes, A Hist. of the Eng. Church, etc., 111. The work referred to is probably the Trialogus, yet more than this number of scriptural references appear in De Civ. Dom.

Testament as authentic; the others were to be regarded as apocryphal.(1) The message of the Bible is not confined to the Church, and the individualism of the Reformer led him into the struggle to throw off the shackles of ecclesiastical authority in this respect, and to permit the freedom of individual interpretation. Here one must be humble, devout, and sincere, if he is to understand the genuine sense of the Scripture, so that the Holy Spirit may teach the true meaning to those who seek it.(2) The Divine origin and absolute authority of the Bible give it a perfect and entire sufficiency; all truth is contained in its pages, either explicitly or implicitly.(3) Wyclif is no literalist, but in many ways his extreme Biblicism leads him into impractical paths -- e.g. the advocacy of consanguineous marriages simply because Abraham married his half-sister, Sarah! He falls into the errors and advantages of all the methods of interpretation of his day, but rather redeems himself by his emphasis upon the figurative interpretation. With his sincere love for his Savior, and his unfaltering trust of the infallibility of the sacred Word, we may summarize the Reformer's faith and theology by saying that Christ as Mediator was the material principle, and the sole authority of the Bible was the formal principle.(4)

III. The third legacy which Wyclif left to succeeding generations grows out of the one just mentioned; it is his emphasis upon the Scripture in the vernacular, which resulted in his translation of the first English Bible, which in turn proved a most influential factor in molding the English language. The

(1) De Ver. Sac. Script., I, 242. See Trialogus, III, XXXI, 239 on "autentica" and "apocrypha".

(2) De Civ.Dom., III, XXVI; see Lechler, 244-245

(3) Trialogus, III, XXXI, 240

(4) Lechler, John Wycliffe, 436

Oxford don was driven, by the logic of his theological position, to the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular of his day (1); it was not his supreme purpose, but rather a consequence--a means to an end. The Scriptures must first be accessible in the common tongue of the people before they can become generally known. This principle is consistent with the general demand of the Reformer that there must be plainness, simplicity and intelligibility in the worship of God -- hence his preference for the Bible in the vernacular.(2)

There can be little doubt that Wyclif met with violent opposition on the part of the Church when he began to give the Scriptures to the people in their own language. He reasoned that if it should be preached to the people it should be read by the people. This was a revolutionary idea, and not merely the extension of an existing practice. To be sure, the nobility had an Anglo-Norman edition of the Bible, including a translation of a few Latin hymns; a few others of good fortune possessed the old Anglo-Saxon versions of the Gospels; but except for the cultured classes these languages were no more intelligible than the Latin of the Vulgate. Some small portions appeared in English before Wyclif's time, especially the Psalms, but nowhere had the whole Bible appeared in the English tongue.(3) Wyclif, with the aid of his followers, is the first to conceive and accomplish this task.

The Oxford Reformer, as did the German Reformer a century and a half later, naturally translated the New Testament first. Wyclif translated direct from the Vulgate; Luther from the

(1) See Workman, John Wyclif, II, 155

(2) Harnack, History of Dogma, VI, 142

(3) See excellent discussions of this subject in Workman, II, 155-170; Lechler, 201-208

Greek original. The work was probably begun in the spring of 1380, and was continued until its completion in the latter part-- probably the autumn -- of 1382. Wyclif gave his personal attention to the New Testament, intrusting the translation of the Old Testament, under his supervision, to Nicholas Hereford and others. A revision of the first edition of the translation was soon imperative, and was probably suggested by Wyclif himself, but he did not live to see it completed. It is to John Purvey, the Reformer's trusted friend and assistant, that we are indebted for this unusual piece of work, which appeared about 1395.(1)

Effort has been made more than once to rob Wyclif of the credit of translating the first complete English Bible, either by asserting that other English Bibles were in existence before Wyclif's, or by doubting that he was the translator of the work which is commonly attributed to him. These attempts to discredit the pioneer work of the Reformer have rightfully failed, for the work is definitely attributed to Wyclif by his contemporaries, as well as by the uninterrupted tradition of history. The best scholarship concludes in this connection:

"There is more contemporary evidence as to authorship than any that could be found, for instance, to prove that Chaucer wrote the Canterbury Tales." (2)

"For this invaluable gift England is indebted to John Wycliffe." (3)

Wyclif's translation of the Bible gave a mighty impetus to the English language, for the trend of the day was away from French and Latin toward a greater use of the vernacular,

(1) Workman logically reaches a much later date than does Lechler, Forshall and Madden, etc.--

See Workman, II, 165, and note 5.

(2) Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, 250

(3) Forshall and Madden, *The Holy Bible, etc.*, Preface, I, 6.

both in speech and writing. Thus Wyclif's Bible has a rightful place in the history of our literature, for it marked an epoch in the development of the English language just as much as Luther's translation did in the history of the German tongue. The Luther Bible did much to crystallize the new High German; the Wyclif Bible did much to crystallize Middle English, being the earliest prose classic in this vernacular. Chaucer was the father of English poetry, Wyclif of later English prose, and together they made the language a fit vehicle of expression for the mass of the English people. Certainly we should honor this rector of Lutterworth for this invaluable legacy of our mother tongue.

IV. The fourth legacy which Wyclif has left for our common good is his emphasis upon national and individual liberty from the power of the man-made Roman hierarchy. Wyclif applied his theory of dominion to the State as well as to the individual, and followed somewhat the political speculation of Marsiglio of Padua and William of Ockham. Our Reformer held that the State is superior to the Church, that the King and Parliament are not subject to the Pope, that the royal power is as sacred as the ecclesiastical, and is complete over temporal things, including the temporalities of the Church, and that men could appeal from ecclesiastical tribunals to the secular. Early in life he had reached the conclusion that the papacy had usurped sovereign rights of the English Crown, that the country was being drained financially for the benefit of the Curia at Avignon, that State legislation should correct existing evils in the Church when the hierarchy had failed. As a patriotic son he could not bear to see England ruled by ecclesiastical potentates; he had no Hildebrandian

conception of the papacy. By furnishing a scientific, workable, defensible argument which justified the action of Parliament in resisting the papal claims, Wyclif did much to lay the foundation of the great Anglo-Saxon spirit of national liberty -- a legacy which every son of Britain and America enjoys to the present.

But it is in the sphere of individual liberty that Wyclif made one of his greatest contributions, for his rugged individualism proved a determining factor in the age-long task of taking the Church from the prelates and restoring it to the people. By recognizing the rights of the individual he came to recognize the rights of the laity as opposed to the clergy, and thus he helped to tear the Church from the grasp of the powerful hierarchy. He emphasized the individual's immediate access to God, an access which is not dependent upon objective form and priestly ministrations, but upon the subjective condition of the heart. No priestly mediation was necessary between God and man. His theory that "dominion is founded upon grace" led him inevitably to conclude that the individual standing in grace has inalienable rights, both temporal and spiritual. These rights cannot be curtailed by the false claims of a worldly hierarchy; any barrier erected between God and man by mere papal claims is to be ignored insofar as it is not in keeping with the Scripture. The individual who is spiritually sincere has a right to read the Bible in an intelligible language and to interpret it; he has a right to preach the gospel without the sanction of the Church; he has a right to make confession directly to God, and to receive forgiveness without the absolution of a priest, etc.-- in short he has the right to be a priest before God. Such tenets

could but work great damage to the ecclesiastical claims of Wyclif's day, and in the end promote the inevitable reform which was destined to champion the rights of the individual.

V. Again, the streams of wisdom which poured from this master mind have left to us the deposit of a better intellectual basis for our Protestant faith, with the thought that reason and revelation are not incompatible. As a Schoolman he turned the powerful searchlight of his intellect upon the Church, both as to doctrine and to practice, testing all both by reason ("ratio") and by revelation ("auctoritas"). To him reason is not only a purely rational approach, but also that which has within itself some intuitive knowledge of truth in relation to the invisible, the moral, the Divine. Some natural light can come to the individual in matters of faith, and it is erroneous to suppose that this light of nature is opposed to the light of faith, so that what appears to be impossible for the one must be held as truth for the other.(1) By this natural light he credits reason with an independent power of penetrating deeply into the knowledge of the mysteries of salvation, a position which was in general agreement with that taken by most of the Schoolmen. But he differed from them in his interpretation of "auctoritas", for he distinguished between God's Word and human tradition as to the weight of their authority; the Divine Word has an unlimited authority which is all-sufficient, while human tradition cannot be so considered. In giving less weight to the authority of tradition, Wyclif deviated from the path of the Schoolmen, and struck out upon a Protestant highway which recognized the Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

(1) Lechler, John Wycliffe, 233

In magnifying the place of reason Wyclif opposed the blind credulity of his day-- e.g. the "ex opere operato" view of the sacraments. He felt that the testimonies of the intellect and of experience were voices to which the faithful should incline a listening ear. Reason was to him indispensable to the right interpretation of Scripture, and without this correct understanding of truth reason could not joyfully give its assent to the content of the Divine record.

Growing out of this association of reason and revelation, plus the need for a greater knowledge of the Scriptures, came his practical system of "poor priests". The secular clergy of Wyclif's day were often unlearned men with inadequate preparation for their task. Langland in *Piers Plowman* passes censure on the parish priests by making them "dumb hounds" who could better track hares in the field than case-endings in the Psalter! (1) Little wonder, for the Church discouraged individual reasoning in regard to the meaning of Scripture by its position that the Church alone was qualified to interpret the Sacred Word! Many of the clergy were not capable of giving a reason for the faith within them-- and if capable, they lost themselves in heroic declamation and excessive rhetoric until the end was forgotten in the means. But over against these men and methods, Wyclif sent forth his "poor priests", who were skilled in interpreting the truth, who studied diligently the sermons of their master, and who were sincere and zealous in imparting the gospel message to hearts hungering after the truth. Preaching was to Wyclif the chief duty of the servant of Christ; nothing was of greater importance than

(1) *Piers Plowman*, B. I. 287; see Workman, II, 208

the illumination of the minds of the hearers by the preaching of the Word, a practical process which united both reason and revelation. Wyclif knew that the office of the clergy was primarily to teach, and that those who did not instruct their listeners were not following the example set for them by the Great Teacher and His apostles.(1) By this emphasis upon the necessity of Gospel preaching, the Reformer sounded a trumpet blast which has been heard down through the Protestant centuries-- namely, that the preaching of the Word, uniting reason and revelation, is the most efficient means of extending the Kingdom.

These five legacies, then, are the contribution of this Oxford Reformer to posterity; and having examined them briefly, we can assert with all confidence that, even though the man himself is far removed from us, his influence is present with us today. The very words we speak, the national and individual liberty we enjoy, the Bible we read, the open mind we retain for a rational consideration of truth-- all these and more go back in some degree to this fourteenth century Schoolman whose works were influential in giving to us today "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

Wyclif was unquestionably a great Reformer; at no time since his day has the spirit of reform been wanting in England or among the Teutonic races on the Continent. Yet in all fairness we must say that the Reformation which he sought to accomplish failed. Oddly enough, it was not in England but in far away Bohemia that Wyclif, or rather Wyclifism in Huss, kindled a flame of revolt that threw all of Christendom into a panic. Ere we leave the English Reformer we ought to make an honest investiga-

(1) Select English Works, III, 144, 464

tion of the reasons why his work failed to accomplish its purpose. First of all, it appears that the attempted reform came too early; it was a premature revolt. The time in which Wyclif lived was a transition period, half in and half out of the Middle Ages. The time was not ripe for a great upheaval of lasting success, for the Renaissance had not yet brought sufficient enlightenment to the people to be of any great consequence, and the consciousness of liberty, among both communities and classes, was too immature to lend a helping hand. Additional factors which worked to the advantage of Luther and his Reformation, and which were not at the disposal of Wyclif, were the influence of the Humanists and the German mystics, the linguistic aids of Hebrew and Greek, seen especially in the Hebrew scholar, Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), and in the Greek of Desiderius Erasmus (1466?-1536), whose critical edition of the New Testament in 1516 became the standard for the translations of the later Reformation period. Further, Wyclif had no colleagues of intellectual calibre approaching his own to lend their aid. One of the greatest lacks was the invaluable help of the printing press, for he was able to publish his writings only by the slow and limited processes of the amanuensis. Had printing been invented in Wyclif's day, it is entirely within the realm of probability that his movement would have been far more influential in rural England than it was.

Wyclif's revolt was far too negative. His critical spirit tended to tear down rather than to build and establish. He was lacking in true organizing genius to make his movement a permanently powerful one; had he had a genius like Calvin to work with him, the result of his labors would have been vastly different. It may also be seen that the Oxford Reformer's work

was too academic to make its appeal to the masses of his day; scholasticism was dying a natural death, and the intellectual approach was not the practical approach at this particular time. Since the Lollard movement was not popular with all classes, it was a failure because it was too local. England was only a minor nation in the Europe of the fourteenth century, and too isolated to affect greatly the currents of thought on the Continent. Actually the moving force was to come later from the Continent to England, rather than from England to the Continent.

Wyclif was too much a single force to accomplish a Reformation. Those who finally succeeded in this not only stood upon the shoulders, as it were, of this man from England, but they also had allies in the secular arm and in educated friends who gave their protection, advice, and counsel. Huss had his Jerome of Prague, and Luther his Melancthon, but Wyclif had no such equal and sympathetic nature to walk by his side. Those who gladly gave what help they could were men of inferior ability compared to their master. Almost alone he faced the vigorous opposition of the Church -- an opposition which was more powerful in the fourteenth century than in the sixteenth, because the inroads of corruption had not yet seriously weakened its structure. Thus we see that Wyclif's failure was due both to his own lack, and to the existing circumstances of the age in which he lived, but unquestionably more to the latter than to the former. Considered alone, we must admit that he was a great reforming spirit in advance of his time, whose task was to shake the ecclesiastical structure in his own land, though its removal and reconstruction was to be left to other hands.

That John Wyclif was a great scholar, Churchman,

critic and reformer has never been doubted in any age, by either his enemies or his friends. Men of true ability are universally admired, yet perhaps the Protestant world has not admired Wyclif and his influence to the extent which he deserves until a comparatively recent date. Modern scholarship (1) has helped to remedy this neglect, so that the man no longer stands in his once remote position, lost in the maze of medievalism, but stands out clearly as a benefactor to succeeding centuries. He was not perfect, to be sure, yet the world of today needs more of the men of his type -- men who will champion the cause of truth and righteousness against seemingly impossible odds; who will leave the stamp of their influence not only upon their own day, but upon the future; who, being dead, may yet speak to posterity of the blessings of liberty as against oppression, of justice as against injustice, of truth as against error, and of righteousness as against the emptiness of an encroaching formality in matters of faith. Wyclif rose above his age because he would not conform to it; and in this respect he is an outstanding example of a zealous follower of his Lord who would not yield to worldly environment.

"And so Wyclif becomes the standard whereby the Non-conformist spirit, in all its subsequent manifestations, must submit to be judged." (2)

We cannot but admire one whose principles in general were so lofty and true, whose unfaltering hold of evangelical truth was displayed through good and evil report, and whose moral courage was manifested in his protests against the despotic powers of the hierarchy, with its sacerdotal and sacramental system. In the light of his consistent and many-sided protests, we must conclude that for his age this man of God was unquestionably a Protestant.

(1) I refer especially to H.B. Workman and Dyson Hague.
 (2) H.W. Clark, History of English Non-conformity, I, 78

SUMMARY OF THE TENETS OF JOHN WYCLIF

H E A P P R O V E D:

1. Supreme authority of Holy Scripture.
2. Supreme Headship of Christ over His Church.
3. Royal supremacy, both civil and ecclesiastical.
4. Seven sacraments, conditionally, and as to number; (violently opposed the Church's position in connection with some of the seven) held the two instituted by Christ as pre-eminent.
5. Predestination, in the extreme sense.
6. Justification by faith, though not clearly or dogmatically expressed.
7. Universal priesthood of believers.
8. Preaching of God's Word as the most perfect work of clergy.
9. Marriage of clergy, though celibacy is better.
10. Infant baptism, but not as absolutely essential for salvation.
11. Sabbath-keeping.
12. Humble life of prayer and poverty.
13. Use of sarcasm in a good cause.
14. Simplicity of speech.
15. Scriptures in the vernacular; likewise confessions, etc.
16. Consanguineous marriages.

H E D I S A P P R O V E D:

--- Doctrines ---

1. Transubstantiation.
2. Power of the keys.
3. Exclusive priesthood of the clergy.
4. Mariolatry (late in life).
5. Image worship (late in life).
6. Purgatory and Treasury of Merits. (late in life)
7. Prayers for the dead.
8. Apostolical succession.
9. Distinction between mortal and venial sins.
10. Final perseverance.
11. Assurance.
12. Refusal of clergy to submit to civil courts.
13. Bishops appointed to heathen countries becoming suffragans in England.
14. Conditional immortality.
15. Socinian view of atonement.
16. Baptismal regeneration.

--- Discipline ---

1. Monasticism.
2. Endowments.
3. Papal bulls and decretals.
4. Tradition.
5. Auricular confession

SUMMARY OF THE TENETS OF JOHN WYCLIF (cont.)

H E D I S A P P R O V E D (cont.)

--- Discipline --- (cont.)

6. Clerical celibacy.
7. Divorce in nearly all cases. (When granted, re-marriage never permitted.)
8. Excommunication.

--- Religious Practices ---

1. Indulgences.
2. Begging by friars.
3. Simony (in which he included selling of advowsons, bribes for promotions, consecration and marriage fees, etc.)
4. Fasting communion.
5. Letters of fraternity. ("selling prayers")
6. Dying in monk's habit.
7. Canonization.
8. Emphasis on externals to the neglect of the inner spiritual life.
9. Intoning, and much music of any kind.
10. Veneration of relics.
11. Incense.
12. Latin services.
13. Family chaplains.
14. Costly churches and abbeys.
15. Costly funerals.
16. Consecration of places.
17. Washing feet of poor on Maundy Thursday.
18. Holy Water.
19. Pilgrimages.
20. Clergy in civil or secular occupations.

--- Secular Practices ---

1. Drunkenness and greediness.
2. Dress and luxury.
3. Amusements. (Tournaments, archery, wrestling, chess, plays, backgammon are named.)
4. Winking with the eyes.
5. Dinner parties.
6. Guilds and societies.
7. Needless taking of oaths.
8. Freemasons.
9. War.
10. Law-suits.
11. Packing and bribing juries.
12. Secular learning.
13. Trades unions.
14. Government by majorities.
15. Combinations to keep up prices.

* * * * *

APPENDICES

APPENDIX AVARIOUS SPELLINGS OF THE NAME "WYCLIF"

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Euclif | 28. Wigclif | 55. Wycliffe |
| 2. Viclef | 29. Wigeclif | 56. Wycliph |
| 3. Viclif | 30. Wiglephus | 57. Wyclive |
| 4. Viklef | 31. Wikleff | 58. Wyclyf |
| 5. Vuiclefus | 32. Wikleph | 59. Wyclyff |
| 6. Whytecliffe | 33. Wiklif | 60. Wyclyffe |
| 7. Wicclyf | 34. Witclef | 61. Wyclyfe |
| 8. Wicclyff | 35. Witcliffe | 62. Wyclyve |
| 9. Wichleph | 36. Witclive | 63. Wyecliff |
| 10. Wickcliffe | 37. Wyclif | 64. Wykcliff |
| 11. Wicklef | 38. Wycliff | 65. Wyklyff |
| 12. Wicklieffe | 39. Wyclyff | 66. Wyklyffe |
| 13. Wicklif | 40. Wycline | 67. Wyekcliff |
| 14. Wickliff | 41. Wychif | 68. Wykecliff |
| 15. Wickliffe | 42. Wycklyff | 69. Wykeclyff |
| 16. Wicklyf | 43. Wycklef | 70. Wykeclyffe |
| 17. Wiclef | 44. Wycklife | 71. Wykleff |
| 18. Wicleff | 45. Wyckliff | 72. Wykleph |
| 19. Wiclefie | 46. Wycklyffe | 73. Wyklif |
| 20. Wiclefus | 47. Wycklyffe | 74. Wykliffe |
| 21. Wicleph | 48. Wyclef | 75. Wyklive |
| 22. Wiclephus | 49. Wyclefe | 76. Wykliff |
| 23. Wiclevus | 50. Wycleff | 77. Wyklyf |
| 24. Wiclif | 51. Wycleph | 78. Wynkele |
| 25. Wicliff | 52. Wycleve | (scribe's error) |
| 26. Wicliffe | 53. Wyclif | |
| 27. Wiclyf | 54. Wycliff | |

The name was used in puns by his enemies as "Weak-belief", "Wicked-life", etc.

The spellings which are the most commonly used are "Wiclif", being almost altogether used in the German; while "Wyclif" and "Wycliffe" appear to be in the majority in the English. However, in English "Wyclif" is probably now in the best repute, despite the recent conclusion of Professor Thomson in the English Historical Review, October 1938, 675-678.

The vagaries of medieval spelling allow many changes in a word, and the possibilities of additional spellings of this name "Wyclif" are many. I have included only those which I have actually seen in my research, although I have heard of others from dependable sources--e.g. some of which began with the strange combination of "Qu" in the place of "W".

Good critical surveys of the variations in the ways of spelling and pronouncing the name are: H. D. Pritchett, a reprint of articles in "Darlington and Stockton Times", Nov. 22, 1924 to Jan. 10, 1925-- pp. 5-7; and the above-mentioned article by Prof. S. Harrison Thomson.

APPENDIX B

Inside the Church at Lutterworth there has stood since 1833 a monument bearing the following inscription:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

J O H N W Y C L I F

THE EARLIEST CHAMPION OF ECCLESIASTICAL REFORM
IN ENGLAND

HE WAS BORN IN YORKSHIRE IN THE YEAR 1324
IN THE YEAR 1375 HE WAS PRESENTED TO THE RECTORY OF LUTTER-
WORTH: WHERE HE DIED ON THE 31ST OF DECEMBER 1384.

AT OXFORD HE ACQUIRED NOT ONLY THE RENOWN OF A CONSUMMATE
SCHOOLMAN, BUT THE FAR MORE GLORIOUS TITLE OF THE EVANGELIC
D O C T O R.

HIS WHOLE LIFE WAS ONE OF PERPETUAL STRUGGLE AGAINST THE
CORRUPTIONS AND ENCROACHMENTS OF THE PAPAL COURT,
AND THE IMPOSTURES OF ITS DEVOTED AUXILIARIES, THE
MENDICANT FRATERNITIES.

HIS LABOURS IN THE CAUSE OF SCRIPTURAL TRUTH WERE CROWNED
BY ONE IMMORTAL ACHIEVEMENT, HIS TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE
INTO THE ENGLISH TONGUE.

THIS MIGHTY WORK DREW ON HIM, INDEED, THE BITTER
HATRED OF ALL WHO WERE MAKING MERCHANDISE OF THE
POPULAR CREDULITY AND IGNORANCE:

BUT HE FOUND AN ABUNDANT REWARD IN THE BLESSINGS OF HIS
COUNTRYMEN, OF EVERY RANK AND AGE, TO WHOM HE
UNFOLDED THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE.

HIS MORTAL REMAINS WERE INTERRED NEAR THIS SPOT: BUT THEY
WERE NOT ALLOWED TO REST IN PEACE. AFTER THE LAPSE OF
MANY YEARS, HIS BONES WERE DRAGGED FROM THE GRAVE, AND
CONSIGNE TO THE FLAMES: AND HIS ASHES WERE CAST INTO THE
WATERS OF THE ADJOINING STREAM.

And the obelisk, thirty feet high, erected in the town near the
Church in 1897, to commemorate the fifth centenary of the Re-
former, bears on its four sides the following inscription:

J O H N W Y C L I F F E

BORN 1324

DIED 1384

RECTOR OF LUTTERWORTH FROM 1374 TO 1384.

THE MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION

THE FIRST TRANSLATOR OF THE BIBLE INTO THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES"

"THE ENTRANCE OF THY WORDS
GIVETH LIGHT."

"BE FOLLOWERS OF THEM WHO THRO' FAITH AND PATIENCE
INHERIT THE PROMISES."

"BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH."

ERECTED IN THE 60TH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MOST
GRACIOUS MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA

June 1897

APPENDIX C

T H E T R I A L O G U S

Professor Shirley (Fasc. Ziz. xlvi) calls this writing of Wyclif "his greatest work, and one of the most thoughtful of the Middle Ages". Professor Gieseler, who gives a syllabus of it, (IV, 250) calls it "his theological bequest to the Church"; and L'Enfant (Concile de Constance, I, 222) describes Wyclif's Trialogus as "le plus important de tous ses ouvrages".

This work was the Reformer's first to be printed, and has been edited three different times: in 1525 (probably at Basle-- so thinks Lewald); again in 1753 at Frankfurt and Leipzig; and again at Oxford in 1869 (Lechler's edition). It may be regarded, for the most part, as Wyclif's deliberate and final utterance on theological doctrine and discipline.

The work consists of a series of colloquies between three speakers, Alithia, Pseudis, and Phronesis-- or Truth, Falsehood and Wisdom respectively. Wisdom speaks as Wyclif's own voice, exposing the sophistry of Pseudis, and sustaining the views of Alithia. This style appears to be a favorite of Wyclif's, since his "DIALOGUS" is a dialogue between Veritas and Mendacium, the first representing Christ-- later Wyclif himself-- and the latter representing the devil.

The name of the work is interesting, the author evidently thinking that "dialogus" meant conversation between two individuals, and only two; so he turns the "dia-" into "tria-" to represent three people in conversation. But the word "dialogus" may properly signify conversation through or among a company, no matter how many.

The nature of the work brought on its destruction, or attempted destruction by the Church authorities, as may be seen from Lewis' statement (Life and Sufferings, etc., 181):

"The copies of this book, having been destroyed by the Papists, are so rare that the learned Mr. Wharton thought that in the library of Trinity College in Cambridge the only copy in England. But His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury has another in his noble library, collected by himself, which, by His Grace's favour, I had the perusal. And the learned Dr. John Evans was so kind as to communicate to me another copy of the same book, which formerly belonged to Bishop Simon Patrick."

However, the rarity of the work was exaggerated, for copies of both the 1525 and 1753 editions are to be found, though the early one is extremely rare. Lechler's more modern edition has made the work available for those who seek it.

CHAUCER'S DESCRIPTION OF A POOR PARSON

"A good man was ther of religioun,
 And was a poure parsoun of a toun;
 But riche was he of holy thought and werk.
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk
 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
 His parischens devoutly wolde he teche.
 Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
 And in adversite ful pacient;
 And such he was i-proved ofte sithes.
 Ful loth were him to curse for his tythes,
 But rather wolde he yeven out of dowte,
 Unto his poure parieschens aboute,
 Of his offrynge, and eek of his substance.
 He cowed in litel thing han suffisaunce.
 Wyde was his parische, and houses fer asonder,
 But he lafte not for reyne ne thonder,
 In sicknesse now in meschief to visite
 The ferreste in his parissche, moche and lite,
 Upon his feet, and in his hond a staf.
 This noble ensample to his scheep he yaf,
 That first he wroughte, and afterward he taughte,
 Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
 And this figure he addede eek therto,
 That if gold ruste, what schal yren doo?
 For if a prest be foul, on whom we truste,
 No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
 And schame it is, if that a prest take kepe,
 A (foul) schepherde (to se) and a clene schepe;
 Wel oughte a prest ensample for to yive,
 By his clenness how a scheep schulde lyve.
 He sette not his benefice to hyre,
 And leet his scheep encombred in the myre,
 And ran to Londone, unto Seynte Poules,
 To seeken him a chaunterie for soules,
 Or with a bretherhede to ben withholde;
 But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
 So that the wolf ne made it not myscarye;
 He was a ~~shep~~ schepherde and no mercenarie.
 And though he holy were, and vertuous,
 He was to sinful man nought despitous,
 Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
 But in his teching discret and benigne.
 To drawe folk to heven by fairnesse
 By good ensample, this was his busynesse:
 But it were eny persone obstinat,
 What so he were, of high or lowe estate,
 Him wolde he snybbe scharpely for the nones.
 A bettre preest, I t~~h~~ow, ther nowher non is.
 He waytede after no pompe and reverence,
 Ne makede him a spiced conscience,
 But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
 He taughte, but first he folwed it himselve."

CANTERBURY TALES-- PROLOGUE, Lines 477-528

Many have thought that Chaucer had Wyclif in mind when he drew this beautiful picture of a poor parson of his time.

APPENDIX E

THE TWO EXTREMES

Walsingham's Scorn

"On the feast of the
 passion of St. Thomas of
 Canterbury, John Wycliffe--
 that organ of the devil, that
 enemy of the Church, that
 author of confusion to the
 common people, that idol of
 heretics, that image of
 hypocrites, that restorer
 of schism, that storehouse
 of lies, that sink of flat-
 tery-- being struck by the
 horrible judgment of God,
 was struck with palsy, and
 continued to live in that
 condition till St. Sylves-
 ter's Day, on which he breath-
 ed out his malicious spirit
 into the abodes of darkness."

(Walsingham, II, 119)

Oxford's Praise

"With one heart, voice
 and testimony we witness all
 his conduct throughout his
 whole life to have been praise-
 worthy; whose honest manners,
 profound scholarship, and red-
 olent fame and sweetness we
 earnestly desire to be known
 to all the faithful; for we
 hold his ripe conversation and
 assiduous labors to tend to
 the praise of God, the salva-
 tion of others and the benefit
 of the Church. We, therefore,
 signify unto you by these
 presents that his conversation,
 from tender years up to the
 time of his death, was so ex-
 cellent and honest, that never
 was there any annoyance or sig-
 nify suspicion or infamy re-
 ported of him; but in answer-
 ing, reading, preaching, deter-
 mining he behaved himself laud-
 ably, as a strong champion of
 the faith, vanquishing those
 who by voluntary beggary blas-
 phemed Christ's religion, by
 Catholic sentences out of Holy
 Scripture. Nor was the afore-
 said doctor convicted of her-
 esy, nor burned of our prelates
 after burial. God forbid that
 by our prelates a man of such
 probity should be condemned
 for a heretic who wrote in
 logic, philosophy, divinity,
 morality and the speculative
 sciences without his peer, as
 we believe, in all our univer-
 sity."

(Wilkins, Concilia, III, 302)

APPENDIX F

CONCLUSIONES WYCCLYFF DE SACRAMENTO ALTARIS
(From Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 105-106)

1. Hostia consecrata, quam videmus in altari, nec est Christus, nec aliqua sui pars, sed efficax ejus signum.
2. Nullus viator sufficit oculo corporali, sed fide, Christum videre in hostia consecrata.
3. Olim fuit fides ecclesiae Romanae in professione Berengarii, quod panis et vinum, quae remanent post benedictionem, sunt hostia consecrata.
4. Eucharistia habet, virtute verborum sacramentalium, tam corpus quam sanguinem Christi, vere et realiter ad quemlibet ejus punctum.
5. Transubstantiatio, identificatio, et impanatio, quibus utuntur baptistae signorum in materia de eucharistia, non sunt fundabiles in Scriptura.
6. Repugnat sanctorum sententiis asserere quod sit accidens sine subjecto in hostia veritatis.
7. Sacramentum eucharistiae est in natura sua panis aut vinum, habens, virtute verborum sacramentalium, verum corpus et sanguinem Christi, ad quemlibet ejus punctum.
8. Sacramentum eucharistiae est in figura corpus Christi et sanguis, in quae transsubstantiatur panis aut vinum, cujus remanet post consecrationem aliquitas ("somethingness" is one rendering), licet quoad considerationem fidelium sit sopita.
9. Quod accidens sit sine subjecto non est fundabile; sed si sic, Deus annihilatur, et perit quilibet articulus fidei Christianae.
10. Quaecunque persona vel secta est nimis haeretica, quae pertinaciter defenderit quod sacramentum altaris est panis per se existens, in natura infinitum abjectior ac imperfectior pane equino.
11. Quicumque pertinaciter defenderit, quod dictum sacramentum sit accidens, qualitas, quantitas, aut earum aggregatio, incidit in haeresim supradictam.
12. Panis triticeus, in quo solum licet conficere, est in natura infinitum perfectior pane fabino vel ratonis; quorum uterque in natura est perfectior accidente.

Publicly Wyclif put forth the following conclusions, which were condemned by Archbishop William Courtenay:

1. Sacramentum eucharistiae est in natura sua corpus panis aut vini; habens, virtute verborum sacramentalium, verum corpus Christi ad quemlibet ejus punctum.
2. Sacramentum eucharistiae est in figura corpus Christi et sanguis, in quae transsubstantiatur panis aut vinum, cujus remanet post consecrationem aliquitas, licet in consideratione fidelium sit sopita.
3. Quod accidens sit sine subjecto, non est fundabile; sed si sic, Deus annihilatur, et perit quilibet articulus fidei Christianae.

(Fasciculi Zizaniorum, 106)

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